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LIFE IN *A HAITIAN VALLEY*

MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS

NEW YORK · ALFRED · A · KNOPF · *LONDON*

1937

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FIRST EDITION

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For
F. S. H.

LIFE IN A HAITIAN VALLEY

PREFACE

HAITI has fared badly at the hands of its literary interpreters. 114 Condescension and caricature have been called upon, especially in recent years, to provide a short cut to an understanding of the people and their institutions. This has been glaringly true of descriptions of the religious beliefs of the peasantry, the so-called cults of "voodoo" and magic, for here are found the greatest distortion of fact, the most striking misrepresentations, and the largest measure of misplaced emphasis.

The consistency of the tone latterly taken toward this life is all the more remarkable because it is almost entirely absent from the works of the earlier writers on Haiti. For all these observers, the importance of the "voodoo" cult lay in the fact that it was a rallying point for slave revolt, and it was only with the tale of the cannibalistic "Congo bean stew," told by Sir Spencer St. John in 1880, that the accent on the more sensational phases of Haitian religion began to be heard. From his time onward, however, through the works of Froude, Franck, Pritchard, Seabrook, Blair Niles, Craige, Wirkus, and most recently, as in a rondo, back to the distorted version of the "Congo bean stew" given by Loederer, Haitian life has been told as a tale of mysterious forces in their most repellent aspects.

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114. It is interesting to speculate just why the life of the Haitian peasant, and, indeed, within the last decade, of the educated city dwellers, thus became a subject for lurid description. In its most honest manifestation actual misunderstanding or naiveté has undoubtedly been the cause; or it may be inferred that certain of the pictures drawn have been dictated by prejudice or by international political considerations. Finally, and within recent times most frequently, writers have seemed deliberately to distort and sensationalize their materials in order to attract to their work a desired notoriety.

The effect of this constant stress laid on the African cults in describing Haitian life has been not only to throw the entire picture badly out of focus, but to distract attention from the equally interesting phases of Haitian society which concern the everyday life of the people. Almost nowhere, aside from pre-Revolutionary eighteenth-century writings, can information be had about the workaday world. The rituals that accompany birth and death, the social and economic values that prevail, characteristic institutions such as the market or co-operative work-groups — one searches in vain for other than cursory mention of these in the later accounts. Even where a writer has included a discussion of such a co-operative organization as the Société Congo on the Isle à Gonave, emphasis is almost exclusively laid on its picturesque ceremonialism. Mention, it is true, is at times made of happy, "childlike" (the favored adjective), normal Haitians in the few pages that recent books have devoted to daytime activities. But with the dusk the "booming drums" are made to sound and the mysteries are again called upon to divert the reader.

114 Yet how are these descriptions of a hysterical, paranoid folk,
105 ridden with fear of the dark forces of magic and the anger
182 of vindictive gods, to be reconciled with the picture of the
Haitian as he is shown in the second section of this book — of a man going about his affairs in matter-of-fact fashion, tending his crops, buying and selling, carrying on his amorous

conquests, establishing and providing for his family? The 114
answer is that such a reconciliation is unnecessary where reli- 105
gion takes its place beside other interests and activities and 182
where, psychologically, the supernatural world is on the same plane as the natural one, having its dangers as nature presents dangers, but also offering its compensations as do other phases of existence.

Investigations of native life such as this one not only re- 122
quire generous financial support, but have need of the sympathetic understanding of those in a position to extend helpful practical aid and advice in the field. To the many persons and institutions whose co-operation made this study possible, it is a privilege to record here my appreciation. Initial support of the work and later appropriations for preparing the material for publication were had from the Social Science Research Councils of Columbia and Northwestern Universities; while a grant-in-aid from the American Council of Learned Societies permitted the recording of songs in the field; and another from the National Research Council allowed motion pictures of motor behavior to be taken — films from which a number of the accompanying illustrations have been derived. Concepts relating to the problem of the results of contact between peoples possessing different customs, habits, and beliefs — a principle objective in the long-term program of research on Negro cultures of which this work in Haiti constitutes but a part — were sharpened through the discussions I have been privileged to have with my associates on the Committee of Acculturation of the Social Science Research Council, Professors Ralph Linton, Robert Redfield, and Donald Young.

Official aid in Haiti could not have been more generously accorded. The sympathy of His Excellency President Sténio Vincent, and M. Jacques C. Antoine, chief of the presidential secretariat in 1934 and at present Secretary to the Legation

122 of Haiti at Washington, made for co-operation by all those in the government of whom it was necessary to seek assistance. Mr. Norman Armour, then American Minister to Haiti and now Minister to Canada, was kind enough to interest himself in this study and personally saw to it that its prosecution was facilitated in innumerable ways, while Colonel Vogel, U.S.M.C., then Major General commanding the Garde d'Haiti, was helpful at a number of strategic points, as was his successor, General Calixte. Aid and inspiration were derived from many friendly conversations with the two outstanding students of Haitian folk-life, Dr. Price-Mars and Dr. J. C. Dorsainvil. My indebtedness to the works they have published on the subject is shown by the references to their publications given at the end of this volume, for their researches must be accepted as basic by any serious investigator of Haitian customs. Their cordial advice to a fellow-student constitutes one of the most pleasant memories of this field-work, as does the assistance given me by Professor Camille Lherisson, of the Haitian Medical College, and M. Henry G. Sylvain, Engineer of the Service des Travaux Publiques.

080 In the valley of Mirebalais itself, the friendliness of those with whom it was my privilege to associate is agreeable to recollect; if they are not named here individually, it is because of the wish of many of them to remain anonymous. However, to my friends Général Léonard Cantave, his sister, Mme. Vesta Cantave, M. Léonce Joachim, and M. Galbert Constance, I cannot sufficiently express my appreciation for their co-operativeness, for the geniality with which we held long discussions of interest to us all, and for the weight which their endorsement of this work carried with the members of
114 the community at large. Similarly, and finally, I wish also
123 to record my deep gratitude for the assistance given me by my wife, who not only participated fully in the rigors of field-work, as she has participated in all other field expeditions undertaken in the course of this research program, but

whose contact with the women of the valley made it possible to obtain information of a kind that would be entirely unavailable to a man working alone. In addition, she has given freely of her knowledge while I was engaged in the preparation of this book; it is only the force of circumstances that prevents it being a collaboration, as reports of our earlier field investigations have been.

MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS

South Woodbury, Vermont
14 August 1936

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LIFE IN A
HAITIAN VALLEY

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INTRODUCTION

THE VALLEY OF MIREBALAIS

1

THE TRAVELER comes suddenly on the valley of Mirebalais, as the road from the capital turns the shoulder of a hill. Long and narrow, the plain stretches before him with its many tones of green. Ahead is the village from which the valley takes its name, its metal roofs aglow in the sunlight, or reflecting the gray sky of the rainy season. Here and there appears a yellow, muddy slash made by the Artibonite River, while framing the valley are the mountains, rising one behind another as they complete its encirclement. 133 361

This first glimpse of the country gives no hint of a numerous population. It is as though this valley, like so many other things in Haiti, had set out to belie its own reality and, in this impression, at the very outset to point the lesson that the observer must seek well beneath the surface if he is to attain any understanding of the country and its people. For just as the unsettled appearance of this Haitian valley conceals numerous habitations, cultivated fields, and hard-working inhabitants, so the frenzy of Haitian religious rites is but a gloss upon disciplined ceremonialism, and the relatively placid everyday existence of the Haitian peasant but a mask behind which is waged a spiritual conflict that is his heritage from the dual sources of his traditions. 121

The commune of Mirebalais is situated in the heart of central Haiti. Lying some thirty-five miles from Port-au-Prince, 101 361 (391)

101 361 [491] both town and district are bisected by the main route between the capitals of the Haitian and the Dominican republics. Yet, once again, this geographical nearness but distorts the psychological distance between Mirebalais and the metropolis. [494] For though the busses, converted from camions, pass to and from the coastal city several times a week, the valley and even the town which is its center drowse in essential isolation. A few hundred yards off the main road find the Haitian peasant following the mode of life of his forebears, oblivious of events outside the valley. Only for a few of the *notables* of the town, the *gros nègres*, who have personal, political, or business contacts with Port-au-Prince, is the comparative proximity to the capital meaningful.

174 It is not possible to say how long this valley has been inhabited. Certainly the early Indians roamed there; and there, as in other parts of the island of Hispaniola, the tragedy of their extinction under the brutality of early Spanish rule must have taken place. 175 103 Moreau de St. Mery, to whom all students of Haiti must acknowledge a debt of gratitude for his painstakingly accurate reports of life on the island, gives the derivation of its name.

> "Mirebalais received its name," he says, "because of the enormous numbers of wild animals the first Frenchmen found there, which recalled to them the small district in the region of Poitou [in France], called Mirebalais, where some of them had probably first seen the light of day. These quadrupeds, first introduced by the Spaniards, had no difficulty in multiplying there after the Indians had disappeared from their native land and the Spaniards, reduced in numbers, were obliged to abandon the great plains, so that horses, cattle, etc. came to exercise exclusive domain."[1]

175 St. Mery's work, which traces the development of Mirebalais as one of the parishes of pre-Revolutionary Haiti, makes it

possible to gain a historical perspective of the valley in which 175
our interest centers. As late as 1702, he tells us, only a few individuals were settled there, and these were mainly hunters and herders, since the policy of that day, based on the official belief that the future of the valley lay in using to the full its grazing resources rather than in the development of agriculture, caused all agricultural activity to be prohibited. Two [177]
decades later, however, when the cultivation of indigo had been successfully introduced, agricultural development proceeded apace. In 1739, in addition to more than a score of indigo-production centers, the valley boasted of numerous coffee, cotton, and cocoa plantations, and by 1789 was a recognized agricultural region.

But for the fact that the great plantations are no longer 241
there, this aspect of life in Mirebalais has been little changed 178
by revolutions and the abolition of slavery. Indigo, of course, has lost its place as an important product, while maize is now among the most significant crops, as might be looked for in the change from a plantation system to one of small individual ownership which was brought about by Haitian independence. But cotton and sugar-cane are still major crops, and coffee, which grows well on the mountainsides, is largely cultivated.

Moreau de St. Mery, writing in 1789, speaks of the French 175
who peopled the valley as "still showing the traits which 648
marked the early colonials. They are good, frank, brave, and opposed to all coercion." In 1723 "they marched with others from the district of the Artibonite" in an uprising against the arbitrary policies of the French West Indies Company, which Charlevoix, one of the first historians of Haiti, so vividly described.[1] In 1729 and 1736 the folk of Mirebalais defended their eastern frontier against attacks by the neighboring Spaniards; eleven years later one hundred and ten of them helped with the defense of the town of St. Louis, which was menaced by the hostile maneuvers of the British admiral

175 648 Divers. In 1768 and 1769 they were "but tranquil spectators of the troubles caused by the re-establishment of the militia," the local military forces numbering at this time 260 whites and 291 *affranchis*, or free men of color.[3]

175 167 This white population was made up chiefly of those who came directly from France or were born in the colony, but also included were the Acadians, one of the most interesting groups who settled in Mirebalais. Fleeing from Newfoundland, they were brought to Haiti before they were sent to Louisiana, and in the course of this migration left some of their number in the valley. It is recorded that on the 26th day of October 1764, in consequence of "a Memorial presented by the Chamber of Agriculture of Port-au-Prince, which stressed the healthfulness of Mirebalais,"[4] each of a number of these Acadian families was allotted a plot of eight hundred square paces, not far from the town. The ending of this episode, however, was not happy, for, transported into a tropical climate that failed to measure up to the claims made for it, the Acadians paid so heavy a toll that soon all trace of them vanished.

175 569 But facts such as these tell little of the fundamental social and economic conditions of pre-Revolutionary Haiti, where Negro slavery constituted the foundation upon which the whole structure of life was erected. That Mirebalais was no exception to the prevailing economic regime is shown by Moreau de St. Mery's figures for the district, yet what stresses existed between the masters, the free persons of color, and the slaves, no record remains to show. Despite the fact that slaves and free men of color were accepted in the armed militia, the 175 567 629 situation was far from tranquil. When, after the French Revolution, there were signs that the decree[5] which accorded to the free men of color political rights equal to those of the whites was in danger of being nullified in practice, it was at Mirebalais that the colored men assembled to insist on the enforcement of this order.[6] Together with some slaves they freed, they formed the nucleus of an army "that under the leader-

ship of a very intelligent mulatto named Bauvais" gained 175
some successes "over the undisciplined forces in Port-au- 562
Prince" and forced the inhabitants of the capital to recog- 669
nize the power of this group by entering into a definite treaty
with them.[7]

There are other indications that life in the valley did not 175
fail to reflect the discontent of the black slaves. Writing in 567
1830, Mackenzie, who was the first British Consul-General to
the Haitian Republic, remarked:

> "It is said by some of the best informed Haitians, that among the mountains that stretch from the neighbourhood of Mirebalais to the coast on the east of Jacmel, there is an extensive association of the descendants of the Maroon negroes, whose independence had been recognised long before the revolution by the then existing government."[8]

It is thus apparent that the institution of marronage, whereby runaway slaves established themselves in the mountains, in many instances living for years beyond the reach of capture and free from attack, was known in Mirebalais as it was else-
where. Mirebalais was also not without contact with the great 175
heroes of Haitian history. Toussaint L'Ouverture conquered and lost the town several times before it became a strategic point "from which his lieutenants, Dessalines and Christophe, menaced Arcahaie and the plain of the Cul-de-Sac."[9]

If but little has been recorded concerning Mirebalais before 175
Haitian independence, even less is known of its later history. 622
Mackenzie, reporting the population of Haiti district by district, gives that of Mirebalais in 1802 as 33,649; but in 1825
as only 16,037.[10] Whether the region included under the term 175
"Mirebalais" differed at the two periods, or whether the 176
hardships resulting from the internal strife that racked Haiti [562 622]
after independence had been gained took a toll of the size suggested by these figures cannot be said. That Mirebalais was an [131]

175 important point in the warfare between the northern Empire
[669] of Christophe and the southern Republic of Pétion is well
[131] known, since the boundary between the two, never definitely
fixed, might be roughly considered as the Artibonite, control
of which, as always, depended on also obtaining control of the
strategic hills about the town.[11] It is not possible to discover
[162] more than approximate figures for the population of Mire-
balais at the present time, since no census of the district has
been made, and the most recent figure of 51,000 for the com-
mune is derived from the baptismal records in the parish
church.[12]

361 From the earliest years of settlement of the valley, the town
has been the center of its life. The government of the com-
[632] mune is located here; here the courts sit; and here the best
schools and the only church of the district are found. Yet it
[363] is a small town, numbering less than two hundred and fifty
houses, and crossed by but three principal thoroughfares
stretching north and south, with ten or twelve cross-lanes.
361 The houses on the principal streets, rectangular and small,
342 are built of wood, plastered over with clay, painted, and
roofed with sheet iron. On the outskirts of the town the roof-
ing is of straw, or banana-leaf thatch, while the walls them-
selves are made of twilled wythes. No house lacks its veranda,
however small, where people may be seen sitting late of an
afternoon and early in the evening, but the life of the
women is lived chiefly in the courtyards behind these houses
that line the streets, where the cookhouses are found and the
361 storehouses, and where all work is done. The *place*, or town
square, lies at the point where the principal route between
Port-au-Prince and the Dominican border turns sharply to
[697] the east. Consisting of an acre or two of cleared land, it is over-
grown with weeds except when, in preparing for festive occa-
sions, the prisoners from the town jail may be seen spending
long hours, machetes in hand, cutting the grass, a few blades
000 at a time. North of the square stands the church, a substan-

North of the square stands the church, a substan- 361
tial structure with rounded arches in the Roman style, roofed 344
over, like most other buildings, with galvanized iron. Other [346]
public buildings are the town hall — the Mairie — and the
"Hall of Justice"; near by are the stone walls of a public
building begun some years ago as a school, but destined ap-
parently to house what is known as the "Bureau of Contribu-
tions," a euphemism for the tax-collector's quarters. Despite 175
the fact that Mirebalais was one of the most difficult regions 178
for the American occupation to subdue during the Caco up- 625
rising of 1918–20,[10] it was one of the first districts where the
Guarde d'Haiti was completely Haitianized, and from which
all American Marine officers were withdrawn. Only a small 625
detachment is stationed there at present. Its well-kept bar- 681
racks are near the church, and the prisons form a part of the [342]
same compound, from whence issue daily the striped-suited [292]
prisoners, men and women, under guard or alone on parole,
who do communal work in the town and the near-by country-
side.

The town awakens at dawn to the chattering of domesti- 364
cated guinea-fowl and the crowing of cocks. Occasionally a 461
camion rumbles through the principal thoroughfare; more 512
rarely an automobile dashes by in great clouds of dust on its 476
way to Las Cahobas, or Hinche, or Santo Domingo City. If
it is a market day, the streets are early filled with country folk
on their way to dispose of their produce, and the clatter from
the market place behind the church is heard everywhere until
the heat of the day brings a lull to all commerce, and drowsi-
ness once more settles over everything. By mid-afternoon
during the planting season, drums can be heard over the
countryside. The sounds are not those of the "throbbing"
vodun drums — though they have more than once been mis-
taken for them by travelers — but they set the rhythm for
the communal work of the combites, which perform co-
operative agricultural labor. As the rapid dusk follows the 512
disappearance of the sun behind the mountains, the voices of

512 neighbors paying friendly visits and of playing children gradually
[264] become stilled. It is the time for the evening meal. By
nine o'clock at the latest all is quiet and Mirebalais, man and
beast, is asleep.

796 The vodun drums are heard only on Saturday nights, and
527 then the dance must be sufficiently close to the town, and the
wind in the right direction, for the sound to be audible.
[556] Permits for these dances must be obtained, and are regularly
given by the police officials — or were in 1934 — and word is
passed on that on a given Saturday certain households will
give vodun dances. If the dances are held in the foothills to
the west, the Tombe River must be forded, and the existence
of such a barrier between the village and the site of the dance
makes this a favorite region in which to hold them, even
though they may have official sanction. During the rainy season
[484] attendance at dances on the opposite bank of the Artibonite
River depends on the height of the stream, for when
[501] it is in flood not even the dugout canoes of the Haitians can
cross it, while the ferry which Moreau de St. Mery speaks of
as having been established in 1739 does not even exist in local
tradition.[10] Yet no dance lacks participants or spectators, for
these occasions furnish the principal opportunity for recreation
even as they fill their proper religious function. Early in
[798] the week discussions can be heard of the dances to be held,
and though the official frown of the Catholic priest is always
to be reckoned with, the importance of these dances, and the
numbers who attend them, do not seem markedly lessened by
[554] this fact. Those whose social position in the community makes
them more sensitive to such criticism merely take the precaution
to slip quietly out of town after dark.

796 When occasions of local or national significance and church
holidays are celebrated, the town is full of country folk and
[788] visitors from the cities. Christmas and New Year's, Mardi
Gras and Easter are all periods for such celebrations, while the
first Sunday of every month witnesses a religious procession

361
363

MIREBALAIS

ABOVE, *A street.*

BELOW, *The place and the church.*

346

[facing P.10]

342

ABOVE, *A country dwelling.*
BELOW, *A combine at work.*

[facing p.11]

about the square that precedes the principal mass of the day. 796
These processions, however, are as a mere rehearsal for the 788
great procession held during the festival of St. Louis, the patron saint of the town. At that time the statue of the saint, carried by the faithful — among whom can be seen more than one perspiring vodun priest and *bocor* — is taken triumphantly through the streets to insure a good year. The nearness of the valley to the village of Ville Bonheur makes the 796 [164]
great religious festival of Saut d'Eau, where the "miracle of the Virgin" is believed to have occurred, almost a local matter. And though Saut d'Eau lies well over the mountains, July 15 finds most of the population of Mirebalais away from home celebrating the miraculous revelation with folk from other parts of Haiti. May Day is celebrated as the "Fête de 527
l'Agriculture," and two years ago a new day of rejoicing was added to the calendar of festivals. This is known as the "Festival of the Second Independence," the anniversary of the departure of the American Marines from Haiti, and is marked by the "illumination" of all houses the night before and a solemn discourse from the mayor after a Te Deum has been sung in the church.

Thus life in the valley of Mirebalais continues the course 175
it has followed for the past two hundred years. Though its (716)
history, as we can reconstruct it, has been marked by turbulent periods, these have been far from the rule. It is true that because of its position it has always been a point to be defended, and often, both before and after the time of Haitian independence, it has been a region where decisive encounters with those who controlled the Spanish portion of the island have taken place. Not for many years, however, until the Caco 175
uprising against the American Marines, did Mirebalais ex- 716
perience military activities on any considerable scale. After the death of Charlemagne Peralte, when his successor selected the valley as a strategic point to be defended, a large force of Marines was encamped near the confluence of the

195
648
Artibonite and Tombe rivers just outside the town. Today Cacos who went through this campaign will tell how sniping was carried on from the "English fort" on the heights to the east of the town and will recount how dangerous it was made for Marines to go unguarded even to the river-banks to draw water. Yet after two or three years the overthrow of the Caco forces brought peace once more to Mirebalais. And while the intervention of the United States has caused significant changes in the larger aspects of Haitian economy and in the political life of the Republic as a whole, yet as concerns the inner life of the people of this valley it seems to have passed without any discernible effect.

195
211
Today in the *place* are found three records of its past. The first of these, in the middle of the square, is a tall palm tree, which in Haiti is the emblem of its attainment of freedom and independence, and near it a rostrum symbolizing the authority of the central government. The second is the tomb of an
211
175
769
overlord of Mirebalais when independent Haiti was not a republic. In florid lettering can be read the tribute engraved on its top:

Ici
Dort de l'éternel sommeil
Pierre Casimir de Vincent
décédé le 13 Août 1836, à l'âge de 71 ans
de son vivant Duc de Mirebalais
et
Commandant de la 4ème Division
Militaire de la Province de
l'Ouest

"Passant, si tu admires les vertus militaires;
Revère les cendres de celui que repose en ce lieu."

De la part de son amie
Delphonnaise Delva.

175
211

The third is a realistic reminder of the most recent occupation of the valley by foreign forces. Cut so deeply into the "tree of liberty" that not even the red and blue paint of the national colors with which its base is repainted annually can conceal it, and contrasting with the ornate inscription on the near-by tomb, is the following legend:

L. MARLOW
AUG. 15. 1920.
U. S. M. C.
DRUNK
AS
HELL
J. F. BROWN

[p.15]
[p.14 is blank]

PART I

THE CULTURAL ANCESTRY OF THE HAITIANS

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CHAPTER I

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE

For the study of a civilization like that of Haiti, which is the 121 result of close and continued contact between peoples with traditions as dissimilar as those of Europe and Africa, a peculiarly lively sense of time depth is needed. Yet though it has been repeatedly stated that Haiti is the child of Africa and France, even those who proclaim this emphatically fail too often to recognize the need for as detailed a knowledge as is possible of how the strands of history were woven into the fabric of Haitian cultural life. It is for this reason that before any description of the culture of Mirebalais can be attempted, not only must the names of the African tribes from which the Haitians were derived be given, but the broad characteristics of their cultures must be considered and, where possible, the classes of their population from which were derived the Negroes who were brought to Haiti. In addition, the importance of knowing the types of Frenchmen who migrated to the island during its colonial period and of understanding the modes of life they followed and presented to their slaves must be viewed as of the first order, while, finally, the manner in which these two sets of traditions were eventually forged into the structure of Haitian life as seen today must be analyzed if more than a superficial glimpse of this life is to result.

Writing in 1730, a Jesuit priest named Pierre François 175
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175 Xavier de Charlevoix [1] designated the following varieties of
567 slaves found on the island: the *Sénégallois*, who are "of all the
162 Negroes the best fashioned, the easiest to discipline, and the most adapted for domestic service"; the *Bambaras*, "tallest of all, but thieves"; the *Aradas*, "those who know agriculture best, but who are the proudest"; the *Congos*, "the smallest and the most apt at fishing," but who were most prone to desert their masters; the *Nagos*, "the most human"; the *Mondongos*, "the most cruel"; the *Mines*, "the most resolute, the most capricious, and the most subject to despair of themselves."

St. Mery, the importance of whose work has already been mentioned, gives a more detailed list than that of Charlevoix.[2] Of slaves who came from tribes living in the northern part of West Africa he names the *Sénégalais*, *Yoloffes*, and *Foules*, the *Bambaras*, *Quiambas*, *Mandingues*, and *Sosos*, as well as Negroes from the Bissagot Islands, though the last two categories are reported as but sparsely represented in the colony of Santo Domingo. Following the coast of Africa round its great bend, he speaks of the *Bouriquis* and the *Mesurades*, or *Cangas*, as deriving from the region between Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, while he notes the *Aradas*, the *Caplaous*, the *Mines*, the *Agouas*, the *Socos*, and the *Fantins*, as coming from the area between Cape Appolonia and the Volta River, an area whose tribes made substantial contributions to the Haitian slave population. Farther east, from what was known as the "slave coast" and today comprises Togoland, Dahomey, and western Nigeria, were brought the *Cotocolis*, "who inhabit the kingdom of *Coto*," the *Popos*, the *Fidas*, and the *Ardras*; while from the interior of the west coast the *Fonds*, the *Maïs*, the *Aoussas*, the *Ibos*, and the *Nagos* are mentioned. Slaves from Benin, in the Niger Delta, as well as the *Mokos* and other tribes of Calabar, were also present in Haiti, though again in small numbers. The basin of the Congo River, how-

ever, contributed not only many slaves called by the name 175
of that river, but also the *Mayombés*, the *Mousombés*, and the 162
Mondongues, though the "true Congos" — the *Franc-Congos* 567
— are listed as having been derived from Angola. As for the
rest of the continent, "One does not see at all in Santo
Domingo any Africans who have come from the remainder
of the west coast of Africa, which ends at the Cape of Good
Hope. . . ."[4]

No final answer can be given about the extent to which 175
these lists of tribal names may be regarded as valid, but the 114
unanimity with which not only Charlevoix and St. Mery, but 162
such other contemporary observers as Bryan Edwards for 567
Jamaica, the Reverend C. G. A. Oldendorps for the Virgin
Islands, John G. Stedman and Jan Jacob Hartsinck for
Guiana — to name only four — recorded similar African regions
and similar tribal names when writing of the slaves of
other parts of the New World, offers strong corroborative
testimony. Moreover, the fact that every tribal designation
given in the lists of Charlevoix and St. Mery can be found on
present-day maps of Africa in the approximate region they
had indicated confirms the accuracy of these early lists.

The characteristics of the various types of Negroes recorded 175
by Charlevoix and St. Mery are not without interest. The 162
Senegalese are described as tall and well made, and of an 157
ebony color, their noses almost as straight as those of whites, 567
their hair less tightly curled than that of other Negroes. They [142]
had the reputation of possessing a superior morality and were
deemed warrior-like. St. Mery had nothing but the highest
praise for the Senegalese slave.

> "He is a farmer, intelligent, good, faithful even in love, understanding, and makes an excellent domestic. Living on millet, maize, and rice, he is very sober, excellent in caring for animals, discreet, and above all taciturn, a quality sufficiently rare among the Africans and

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which one does not find often enough even among civilized peoples."

Not all of the Mohammedan slaves, however, had the desirable qualities of the Senegalese. The Bambara, for example, were depicted as insolent and not always to be trusted, as the designations "those who steal turkeys" and "those who steal sheep" would seem to indicate.

The people between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast were known as a hardy group prone to revolt and desertion; they were not held desirable as slaves, and thus it is not strange that few of them were found in the colony. A similar appraisal was made of the Gold Coast Negroes, for while they were described as generally well made and intelligent, they were also assessed as unreliable, deceitful, lazy, given to flattery, great consumers of food, drunkards, and wantons. And as for the Fanti and the Mina, they were spoken of as "extremely proud, waging constant warfare, capricious, and ready at any time to commit suicide."

The Negroes of the Slave Coast were favorites in Santo [142] Domingo. Their characteristic lighter skin-color, to be observed at the present time in their peculiar yellowish or reddish hue, confirms their provenience. They were thought intelligent but avaricious, and were designated as "eaters of dogs." The Ardra women, "continuous talkers," and quarrelsome, were rarely employed as domestics, since the Negroes from the region of Dahomey apparently learned French with the greatest of difficulty, so that to understand their speech was considered to be the greatest test "for those who flatter themselves that they have command of Créole."

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The Ibos were found excellent for work in the fields, yet difficult to manage, for the slightest fault-finding or ridicule caused them to commit suicide,

> "the idea of which, far from terrifying them, seems to hold an attraction for them, for they believe in the trans-

> migration of souls. Too often it has come about that the *Ibos* of a given plantation have agreed all to hang themselves, in order to return to their country." 175 152 157 262

So well recognized was this tendency of the Ibo slaves to commit suicide, that they were described in Créole by the formula: "*Ibos pend' cor' a yo*—The Ibos (are those who) hang themselves." None the less, many slaves from this tribe were acquired. Their strong communal and tribal ties made it advantageous for those who owned them to obtain more of them, since newcomers "were accorded help, care, and instruction by those who had preceded them."

According to St. Mery, the Negroes most common in the colony came from the Congo coast and Angola, and were known by the generic term *Congos*. The *Franc-Congos*, who came from the kingdoms of Congo and Angola, were 175 152 157

> "of a docility and gayety that makes them much desired. Loving song, dance, and ornaments, they make excellent domestics, while their intelligence, their facility in speaking a pure Créole, their jovial countenances without markings . . . cause people to prefer them for house-servants; they also make good laborers and good fishermen."

That the large numbers of Congo Negroes imported into Haiti have left no more of the elements of their culture in the island than are found is perhaps due to this very devotion to their masters, for a lively tradition of the present tells how, during the slave revolts, the Congo Negroes most often remained on the side of their masters and most often betrayed their fellows. 173 152 157

Not all the Negroes from the Congo area were as amiable as these just mentioned. The *Mondongos* had "the most execrable excess of eating their fellows." This quotation gains special significance because of the prominence which it has 175 152 157 266

175 162 264 569 been given through its use to substantiate the many charges of cannibalism in Haiti that have been made. Yet those who, desirous of establishing such cannibalism, quote this passage from St. Mery do not always remember to quote it in its complete context:

> "Some of these butchers of human flesh are also brought to Santo Domingo . . . where, as in Africa, they are the horror of the other Negroes, notably of the Congos, who, because of their nearness to them [in Africa], are most exposed to their cruelties." [6]

194 162 569 These are thus the tribes who were presumably the most important in the Negro ancestry of the Haitians of today. Was there any least common denominator in language which made it possible for slaves fresh from Africa to communicate with one another after their arrival in Haiti? Was there sufficient similarity in their cultures so that this might form the basis for a retention of African beliefs and behavior despite the vicissitudes of slavery? And what were the characteristics of the African civilizations of these people?

191 194 169 137 569 The picture of West African life, as it is commonly drawn, emphasizes the great number of small tribal groups following dissimilar modes of life, speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and worshipping different gods. In a very general sense this is not untrue. On the face of it, the number of languages that are spoken in the area from which the slaves were derived would seem to have constituted an effective barrier not alone to any concerted action on the part of slaves, but even to communication between them, especially since in many regions of the New World it was a fixed policy to separate slaves from the same tribe.

Yet behind this semblance of sharp dissimilarities lies a basic unity of language and culture in all of West Africa, so that though languages were and are mutually unintelligible, structurally and idiomatically they are much the same. This

1: Herskovits 2-4, 6 (1896) 1937 SV3 Sabs SV3

is why Créole, not alone in Haiti, but also in Martinique, in Trinidad, and in Louisiana, like Negro English in other portions of the New World, shows such consistency in structure and idiom. The slaves, having mastered a requisite number of words in the language of their masters, merely poured them into this mold of their own linguistic patterns and, approximating the phonetic values of such words in terms of the West African modes of speech, thus established a means of communication between one another, no matter what their tribal derivation.* [illegible] 567

The region of West Africa which furnished the slaves was an area of great and settled political entities. Here were to be found the Fula and Mandingo empires in the western portion of the area, and the Hausa kingdom in northern Nigeria; the Ashanti and Fanti states in the Gold Coast, and, to the east, the kingdoms of Dahomey, of Yoruba, and of Benin; southward, those of Kongo and Loango. In all this vast territory law and order reigned, and regimentation of behavior under the direction of kings and priests was the rule. With this went a discipline that so deeply stamps African tradition that even the many years of European dominance have not been able to efface it. 174 567

The social life in this area, as well as its political organization, is to a very considerable extent a unit. Polygyny, the institution whereby a man may have more than one wife, is found in the entire region. Everywhere descent is counted on one side of the family, either the male or the female, and the larger significant relationship groupings that are composed of those who regard themselves as descended from a single and often mythical totemic ancestor are equally characteristic. Discipline rules within the family as well as outside it and is exacted from the earliest days in the life of a child. Needless to say, it is a far cry from this ordered state of society to the disorganized life which the stereotype of the "savage African" envisages.

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Despite the influence of Mohammedanism in the north, there are certain similarities in religion to be found everywhere. Even among the Mohammedans, magic is as potent as it ever was, and as St. Mery correctly observed for his time regarding the Mohammedan slaves, the aboriginal gods have by no means been forgotten. On the west coast and in the Congo, however, pagan religions having a degree of complexity which accords with the complexity of the other aspects of these civilizations are found everywhere. Magic constitutes only one aspect of these systems in which pantheons of deities, each pantheon and each member of each pantheon with its special function, are held to control the destinies of the world and of man. The ancestral cult is another important aspect of West African belief, with the spirits of the dead envisaged as living on in another world, yet alert to manifest power for good or evil among their descendants. Not only in cosmology, but in ceremonialism as well are there patterns that characterize all West Africa. The worship of the gods through the dance, and the phenomenon of possession of devotees by their deities; the place of song in worship, and the special character of this music; the use of drums and other percussion instruments such as the rattle and iron gong in religious rites; these again are elements which all slaves in Haiti, no matter what their tribal affiliations, had in common.

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Nevertheless, as one studies Haitian folk-custom and folk-belief today, recognizable survivals of traits from the cultures of all the tribes that have been named are not to be found in anything approaching a comparable degree. Little of Senegalese practice is to be seen at present, while similarly, at least
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in the valley of Mirebalais, far less Congo derivatives can be discerned than would be expected when the vast number of Congo slaves imported into Haiti are recalled. Practically no traces of Gold Coast or Ivory Coast custom and belief are discoverable; the word "Ibo" appears from time to time, and several Ibo gods are worshipped; Nago deities, as will be seen,

manifest themselves in large number. The majority of African traits, however, derive from the geographical center of the slaving area, especially from the region of Dahomey. Even the famous word "voodoo" is Dahomean, as all Haitian writers and some Europeans and Americans have recognized. Whatever its meaning in Haiti at the present time, its derivation is clear. It is the vodun of the Fon-speaking people,— a word which is best translated as "god." Names of gods, and social and economic institutions, point their origin to this same Dahomean source. This being the case, it may be well to give a general description of the civilization of these Dahomeans, as an aid in the interpretation of the various phases of Haitian peasant life which are to be considered in the ensuing pages.*

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In their basic attitude toward life the people of Dahomey have achieved a blend between co-operation and competition. Living in a society which, from before the time of contact with the Europeans, had a pecuniary base, with its resulting competitive drives, the desire to gain wealth both as an end in itself and for the prestige to be derived from its display is outstanding in native psychology. At the same time, and most particularly in the field of production, co-operative endeavor is to be found throughout the kingdom. As with all West African folk, agriculture is the most important element in Dahomean economy. Other forms of production are iron-working, brass-casting, weaving of cotton and raffia cloth, the making of appliquéd designs on ceremonial cloths, and the manufacture of pottery.

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A large part of the heavy labor in Dahomey is done by means of the co-operative groups known by the term *dokpwe*. These associations not only clear the fields, but do the strenuous work of erecting walls for houses and compound enclosures and of thatching. When work is to be done, the one who is in need of the services of a *dokpwe* goes to the chief and arranges for the men to work for him on a given day. If he is wealthy and the task is a considerable one, he may call two or three *dokpwe*. No fee is paid these men for their services. If a field is to be hoed, each worker takes responsibility for a row, and the line of men moves down the acreage to be prepared for planting to the rhythm of drums and gongs, and to the accompaniment of songs which are at once the most characteristic and the most joyous aspect of this communal labor. Yet the invasion even of this co-operative spirit by the competitive drive is not absent, for if two or more groups are employed, each strives to outdo the other, while if only one *dokpwe* is working, it is divided into two squads which contest to see which one can hoe the larger plot. The reward for victory is the privilege of singing songs of derision against the laggards. When the assigned task has been completed, recompense takes the sole form of a feast, whose lavishness varies with the resources of the host for whom the work has been performed.

One aspect of West African agricultural production which is significant for the understanding of New World Negro slavery was the institution of the plantation. The fact that slavery was widespread in West African society is well known, but it is not so clearly understood that forms of African slavery existed which were far different from the comparatively mild and personal form of household servitude that is generally associated with that region. In Dahomey, and probably elsewhere along the west coast, members of the ruling class were wealthy landowners who carried on large-scale production, utilizing great numbers of slaves. These slaves were looked after by overseers who were responsible to their employers, to whom they were often related by blood. It is unnecessary to stress the importance of this fact, since not only was the slavery to which the Negroes were brought in the New World familiar to them as an institution, but work on plantations was also not unknown to them.

The primary mechanism of distribution in Dahomey and in all West Africa is the market. In the markets, which rotate from locality to locality in accordance with the days of the Dahomean four-day week, foodstuffs and all other products are to be found. One outstanding fact concerning West African markets is that most of the trading is carried on by women, whose economic position in the culture is a very favorable one. What women produce is theirs, to be disposed of as they wish, and the proceeds cannot be alienated by father, husband, or son. So complex is the economy of distribution that both retail and wholesale centers are to be found, and, concomitantly, a middle class exists which is not unlike that known to European countries. Its members, usually women, are not primary producers, but make a living by buying the foodstuffs at the wholesale markets that they later resell at a profit in the retail centers of trade.

Before the conquest of Dahomey by the French, the monarchy towered above the structure of Dahomean life. Firmly established in its absolutism, with an efficient administrative organization, there was no activity in the land which it did not invade and supervise. Regimentation was the order of the day, and, despite European control, has persisted to the present. It is not strange that in these highly organized kingdoms such as Dahomey, the common West African secret societies were absent, for secrecy is an invitation to revolt, and where such despotism reigned as was found in the native kingdoms of the area, efforts were not spared to see that no subversive movements were nurtured.

The household is the smallest unit of Dahomean society, and has its physical expression in the compound, a group of individual houses surrounded by a wall. Polygyny, as elsewhere not only in West Africa but over the entire African continent, is the rule, an institution which everywhere follows the widespread African belief that it is not wise for two wives to occupy the same house. The inner life of the Dahomean household is, of course, deeply conditioned by this fact of plural marriage.

1: Herskovits [illegible] (1936) 1937 [illegible]

(CONT) Since the institution brings no reproach, the wives, living in separate dwellings, inhabit the same compound, and often welcome newcomers. Each woman in her turn cohabits with her husband during one Dahomean week of four days and during this time lives in his house, prepares his food, and otherwise cares for him. At the onset of pregnancy, a wife drops out of this regime, and does not again take her place until after her child has been born and its period of lactation is ended — a period of nearly two years and a half. Though a person in most cases belongs to his father's family, the intimate personal relationship is that between a mother and her own children. Marked affection between father and children is the exception rather than the rule, something that is reflected in the fact that though controversy over the disposal of a father's property almost invariably follows his death, the disposal of a mother's goods is rarely marked by dissension.

A compound is headed by its oldest male, and several adjoining compounds, all of whose inhabitants constitute an "extended family," heed the word of the oldest of all the brothers who are the heads of the individual units which make up the complex of households. Finally, the members of those extended families who count descent (in the male line) from the same mythological ancestor form still larger relationship groupings, which may be termed totemic sibs. As might be expected, the ranking group is that in which the descendants of royalty hold membership, and its reputed ancestor, or totem animal, the leopard, is sacred here as it is in most of West Africa. The ancestral cult of West Africa must be conceived as much a part of social organization as of religion, for the worship of the ancestors validates for sib and family heads the control they exert over the members of their relationship group. Not only are the souls of the dead powerful, but their powers increase with time. And with the inevitable logic of this belief, it is held that the souls of those who have been

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most powerful for good or evil during their lifetime retain and exert greater powers after their death than ordinary folk, so that it follows that the living must see to it that the dead of their families do not become dissatisfied and impatient with them. From this stem the elaborate funeral rites, the lavish expenditures in the ceremonies of the ancestral cult, and the meticulous care to insure the sacrifice of whatever is demanded by the ancestors; for should these matters be neglected, the penalties exacted by the dead, who in time themselves become deities, follow relentlessly in a manner not far different, as a matter of fact, from the sanctions that, as will be seen, are exacted by the dead in Haiti when the rituals of death have been neglected.

Dahomean religion consists of a well-knit, closely organized system of belief which falls logically into several sub-categories.[1] The first of these concerns the Great Gods; the second has to do with a series of semi-public or familial deities associated with the sibs, and the gods of the ancestral cult; the third comprises a group of personal powers or forces which include the deities behind the all-important divining cult and the souls of men; while the fourth is that of magic. Dahomean religion is most closely related to that of the Yoruban people, though in its general structure it may be taken as a more complex and explicitly stated form of the religions which characterize the cultures of all West Africa.

The three subgroups of the first category, that of the Great Gods, comprise pantheons of nature deities, which are given the generic designations of Mawu-Lisa, the Sky, Sagbata, the Earth, Xevioso or Sogbo (known in Haiti by this as well as the Yoruban designation of *Shango*), Thunder and the Sea. Each deity of these pantheons has its special function within the general range of powers of the group as a whole. The worship of the gods is carried on at stated periods in temples specially set aside for the purpose by priests and devotees who have undergone varying periods of initiation and have learned

[1] [Cf. Herskovits, M. and F. (I), passim. Cf. p. 321, Category 116. — Analyst]

050 to speak the special "languages" of their particular cults.
[788] [787] [796] One aspect of this initiation,[a] which has been carried over almost unchanged into some parts of Haiti (though not into Mirebalais) is the ordeal by fire, in which the novitiate must plunge his hand into a pot of boiling cornmeal and rest his foot on the red-hot stones which support the pot.

The role of the family deities has already been given; of the third category, that of the personal forces, one finds first of all the soul, of which each individual is conceived as having three. More important is the cult of Fa, or Destiny, which came to Dahomey from the Yoruba, and is a part of a widely spread system of discovering the destiny of a man that characterizes not only West Africa and the remainder of the continent, but most of the Old World. In Dahomey today this end is carried out by assessing the significance of the various permutations and combinations of sixteen palm kernels "thrown" by the diviner. In addition there exist traditionally earlier and less "official" methods of divining, which in the main are those which have survived in the New World. [776] [771] Intimately associated with both the soul and the destiny of man is the deity who is at once a member of the great pantheons and one of the most personal of all the gods, Legba, whose African importance is attested by the extent to which he is today worshipped in many parts of the New World, and by his universality in Haiti. From the point of view of Dahomean philosophy Legba may be regarded as the god of accident, who gives to man a "way out" in a world ruled by an otherwise inexorable fate. Gross in his appetites and capricious, he is, nevertheless, beloved by the Dahomeans, and though his name is usually erroneously translated by the European term "devil," no appellation could be farther from reality. Of particular significance for his role in Haitan life as guardian of the crossroads and of the *barrière* is his place in Dahomean theology, since it is said: "Before the gods can

[a] [i.e., The initiation of devotees by priests into the religious cults of Dahomey - Analyst]

1: Herskovits 2-4, 5 (1936) 1937 [illegible]

eat, Legba must be fed" — in other words, Legba is interlocutor between man and gods. [illegible]

Another figure in this category of personal deities is Dã. Briefly, it would seem that Dã is an abstraction, used to designate anything sinuous, which moves silently, undulates, and cannot be compelled. It is the principle of movement, of energy, of life itself, and, by extension, of fortune. Often spoken of as a serpent, Dã is nevertheless but the principle of mobility. If not cared for, it will weaken, be preyed upon by others of its kind, and a man's fortune will disappear. Why, then, has this Dahomean serpent cult in its Haitian form been given so important a place in the writings on Haitian religion? In the first place, the principle represented by Dã is symbolized by serpents. Again, a myth describes the rainbow serpent to be one of a pair of great snakes, the other of which lies coiled beneath the earth to support its weight, that it may not fall into the sea. But most important of all is the regard for the snake in Whydah, where it is believed to be the mythical animal ancestor of the large relationship group whose center is that coastal city. The rainbow serpent is Dã Aido Wedo, [776] sometimes known as Damballa Wedo, whose importance as a Haitian deity is mentioned in all works which treat of Haitian religion, while Dangbe, so often found in the literature on Haiti, is, however, this Whydah totem which with time has also been adopted more widely. Thus much that has been [778] written of serpent-worship in this region of West Africa — [771] the place of origin of the patterns of most of the religious cults found in Haiti today — is the result of misconception resulting from a failure to analyse this belief to its ultimate significance.

It remains but to speak of magic. Magic in West Africa is not an isolated phenomenon, but is closely integrated with the other aspects of religion. In Dahomey magic charms are sold by professional workers of magic, but the derivation of the

000 powers which actuate their charms are variously ascribed to Legba, the Earth gods, and, most importantly, the "little folk" of the forest. Acceptance of the power of magic, however, is by no means confined to Africa, for it is characteristic of all the Old World, if not universal. Hence, as will be seen, (789) the belief in magic held by the Africans who were imported (778) into Haiti met with the corresponding beliefs of the Europeans who were their masters, so that today Haitian magic represents almost a complete merging of these two.

17 This, then, in briefest survey constitutes the culture which predominantly gave the Haitian people the African elements 176 found in Haiti today. But the types of Europeans and of European behavior with which the slaves came into contact are also important and must next be examined, for it was these European patterns that, under contact, impinged upon the African habits of thought and action in such a way that, merging with the aboriginal customs, the Haitian culture found today was eventually shaped.

L. Herskovits 5-4,3 (1936) 1937 [illegible]

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE SLAVES FOUND IN HAITI

THOUGH by the time of the French Revolution "the immense army of slavery had increased to such proportions that in the face of it the white world seemed reduced to a mere handful of men,"[1] this was by no means the case in the earliest days of the colony of Santo Domingo. As late as 1681 the whites outnumbered the Negroes almost three to one,[2] and it is not until a hundred years later that, in the words of St. Mery, there were "eleven and three tenths slaves for one white."[3] 175 162 569

Yet in the fashioning of the present-day culture of the Haitian peasants, this "mere handful," exerted an influence out of all proportion to its size. That this should have occurred is not strange in view of the relationship between Negroes and whites, which was that between slaves and masters; that it did occur is amply shown in the contemporary accounts of Haitian and West Indian life, which tell us how the Negroes everywhere made conscious efforts to achieve the standards of those who to them represented power, wealth, and position. But while the prestige of the master-class must be acknowledged, care must be taken not to accept uncritically an assumption that has colored many accounts of the lives of primitive peoples who have come into contact with European 178 569 563 177

[redacted]

[History of Haiti in 17th-18th Century. The Haitian white Population]

179 cultures — namely, that the traditions and beliefs of these groups cannot withstand the impact of what is termed "civilization." What invariably seems to follow when peoples having differing customs, beliefs, and cultural heritages come into continuous contact is that both give, and each takes. What aspects of the new culture a given people will take, and what in turn they will give, must vary according to the particular historical situation under which the contact occurs. But both 178 processes do go on, and, as will be shown in the case of Haiti, though the Negroes retained much of their African culture, they also freely took over and adopted the customs and behavior of the Europeans among whom they lived.

563 Certain questions, therefore, must be asked about this white element in the population. To what extent was it a unit in its derivation and in its special customs — did its members come from a single social class of the home country, or were all elements of French society represented? What were the patterns of family life, of religion, of economic organization, of morals, which the whites presented to Negro eyes? These are matters of great significance, for one telling factor in the mingling of cultures is the type of carrier through whom contact between civilizations is effected. If, for example, European missionaries or traders or administrators on short tenure and without their families are introduced into an area, a far different picture of European life will be presented to the native from that were immigrant settlers to come among them with their wives and children; and this result, moreover, to seek finer distinctions, will show additional divergencies according to the social position of these migrants. Therefore it is necessary to consider the types of Frenchmen whose modes of living were to influence the behavior which the descendants of their slaves were to perpetuate when these had attained their freedom as individuals and their independence as a nation.

175 563 The "Corps of Adventurers" who in 1632 comprised the dominant element in the population of Haiti included four

1: Herskovits [illegible] (1934) 1937 [illegible]

[History of Haiti in 17th-18th Centuries- The Haitian White Population]

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groups: the buccaneers "who were occupied with the hunt," the filibusters "who cruised the seas," the *habitants*, "who cultivated the land," and the bondsmen "who, for the most part, lived with the *habitants* and the buccaneers."[4] Letters of the period permit a somewhat more detailed description of the social groupings of pre-Revolutionary Haiti than that just given — a matter of some importance, since it must have been at this time that the merging of African and European civilizations was at a stage when the basic outlines of its eventual structure were being formed. The early population seems to have been made up in large part of the flotsam and jetsam of Paris: "a sort of obligatory enrollment of colonists, an enforced recruiting of emigrants from those elements of the metropolitan population judged unassimilable"[5] — those who were without means of support or under suspicion of crime, insolvent debtors, "adventurers," and those for whom emigration represented the sole existence open to them.

The *engagés*, or bondsmen, were those who, lacking the funds to pay their passage, pledged themselves to planters for a period of three years. During this time they were treated like the Negro slaves, and at the expiration of their terms were turned into the world with little enough to show for their hard labor.[6] The Protestants who migrated to Haiti were a far different type of settler, but these were few in number, and some, such as the fifty-eight who came to the island in 1687, traveled in the very ships which brought convicts condemned to hard labor for life. Ex-convicts and escaped criminals, discharged soldiers and deserters were also found. In many instances, however, persons of these types seemed by their achievements to have proved themselves not undesirable additions to the population. "I have had 900 of them whom I have placed," wrote one M. de Cussy in 1688; "they are industrious folk, and the planters are very pleased with them." One escaped criminal, who was not discovered as such until many years after he had come to the colony, was permitted to buy

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175 563 his freedom for ten thousand *livres*, "which," an official report stated, "will be used to build prisons in the Cul-de-Sac." Another did so well in his new home that, though his past was known, he was never molested and died the owner of twenty-two Negro slaves.[7] Others who came to Haiti were sent there for reasons of waywardness, or because they had been involved in escapades that threatened trouble for them or their families, or because, showing no aptitude for gainful employment, their relations chose to send them to the colony rather than to be burdened with their support. Of these early colonists de Vassière says, with apparent justification: "In truth the morale and the manners of this population were what they might be supposed to have been, execrable."[8]

These categories, however, do not give the full tale of the non-Negro peoples who eventually contributed of their blood
564 to the present-day Haitian population. In the earliest times the Spaniards sold white as well as Negro slaves to the New World, as numerous *assientos* testify. Before the time of French control of the western portion of the island, Haiti must have received her proportion of these unfortunates.[9] French women, many of them women of the streets, some mere girls who had come from convents, were imported in the early days to encourage the buccaneers and the filibusters to lead a more settled life.[10] In 1696, when the French abandoned the island of St. Croix, its inhabitants, both masters and slaves, were transported to Haiti, there to re-establish themselves on land allotted to them by the government.[11] Acadians from Newfoundland were landed at the Mole St. Nicholas in 1764, and, as has been mentioned, some of them were eventually settled in the valley of Mirebalais, there to disappear after a few years.[12] At about the same time, in accordance with a policy of increasing the white population, 2,470 Germans were brought to the island. Unlike the Acadians, these people thrived and developed an extensive cultivation of coffee, and their colony was in a healthy state at the time of the French

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Revolution.[13] St. Mery also records the importation and sale in 175
1730 of more than five hundred Natchez Indians from New 563
France (Louisiana) "as well as others at a later date, both from Louisiana and Canada." [14]

A final class of settler must be mentioned, whose coming is 175
reported to have given a better tone to the drab picture of 563
Haitian life. This class was composed of members of the 565
French nobility, who in their new home attempted to maintain the standards which characterized and regulated their lives in France. Unlike many of the earlier inhabitants, to whom the difficult life of the planter did not appeal, the nobles tended to continue their status as country gentlemen in their new environment, and, by establishing plantations, to reproduce in so far as was possible, their situation in France as
a group of landed proprietors. As a result, there soon grew up 175
between these planters living on their estates and the popula- 563
tion of the cities and towns the same distinctions of caste and 565
the same blind rivalry which, before the Revolution, sepa- 369
rated the French country squires and the city dwellers in France itself.[15]

The existence of these two classes within the white population of the colony, which is commented upon by many writers of the period, must have presented to the Negro slaves strikingly different views of the life of the whites. In a manuscript of Moreau de St. Mery, at present in the archives of the Ministry of Colonies in Paris, a group of some two hundred of these gentlefolk who in 1763 lived in the region of what today is Cap-Haitien, in northern Haiti, is spoken of as that of a special class, and their existence is contrasted with that of the city folk. Living on their plantations, with the cultivation of which they were exclusively occupied, their mode of life was different from that of the inhabitants of the cities and towns, where were found dealers in wholesale produce, officers of the crown, lawyers, solicitors, and merchants. Some forty years later another writer, writing from the point of view of the

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175 563 565 369 [463] planters and expressing their contempt for the townspeople, speaks of the towns as existing primarily to serve the needs of these country squires as centers for the storage and disposal of their produce: "There are found merchants, artisans, judges, recorders, solicitors, notaries, bailiffs, doctors. But one finds neither nobles, men of property, nor persons of wit and perception."[16]

175 364 563 The physical aspect of the cities had little to recommend them, especially since the utter lack of sanitation made for extreme uncleanliness in all Haitian centers. This fact is of special interest in the light of the frequent references to this trait of Haitian cities in the writings of those Europeans who described the life of independent Haiti. Invariably in such accounts the littered state of the streets, even in the capital, is stressed, and tendered as evidence of the absence of civilization in this Negro Republic.[17] Even though occasional mention is made that this state of affairs existed before the Revolution, nowhere, whether in St. John or in the later writers who date from the time of the occupation of the country by the United States Marine Corps, is there any realization that this condition antedates the independence of Haiti. The cleanliness of Africans in Africa wherever the natives have ready access to water has been well attested, and is still true in those regions from which the ancestors of the people of Haiti principally derive.

175 571 368 563 Yet some aspects of life in the towns livened the picture of Haitian colonial existence. Outstanding were the opportunities offered by these centers for social intercourse, and even for intellectual and artistic stimulation of a kind, such as was afforded by the famous *Cercle des Philadelphes* of Cap Française, dedicated to literary, philosophical, and, above all, to political discussions.[18] Masonic lodges, later taken over by the Negroes and today of appreciable importance in Haiti, were also instituted by the French, the first having been founded at the Cap in 1740.[19] Purely social meeting-places, such as public

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baths or public halls, were in operation, while in the towns of Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Saint-Marc, and Cayes, theaters were established which produced "the latest plays from Paris" and attracted large audiences.[39] 563 175 368 571

Despite all this, the canker of homesickness constantly gnawed at the colonists even in the towns — the feeling that a stay in the colony was only for the interval needed to allow a man to escape to the mother country with a fortune. On the estates the loneliness and isolation of plantation life are commented upon repeatedly. A letter of the period, without place or date, found in the family papers of the historian de Vassière, discusses this with poignancy: 175 181 563 175 181 567 571 563

> "Have pity for an existence which must be eked out far from the world of our own people. We here number five whites, my father, my mother, my two brothers, and myself, surrounded by more than two hundred slaves, the number of our negroes who are domestics alone coming almost to thirty. From morning to night, wherever we turn, their faces meet our eyes. No matter how early we awaken, they are at our bedsides, and the custom which obtains here not to make the least move without the help of one of these Negro servants brings it about not only that we live in their society the greater portion of the day, but also that they are involved in the least important events of our daily life. Should we go outside our house to the workshops, we are still subject to this strange propinquity. Add to this the fact that our conversation has almost entirely to do with the health of our slaves, their needs which must be cared for, the manner in which they are to be distributed about the estate, or their attempts at revolt, and you will come to understand that our entire life is so closely identified with that of these unfortunates that, in the end, it is the same as theirs. And despite whatever pleasure may come from that almost ab-

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175 solute dominance which it is given us to exercise over
181 them, what regrets do not assail us daily because of our
567 inability to have contact and correspondence with others
571 than these unfortunates, so far removed from us in point
563 of view, customs, and education."[31]

175 This letter speaks of the presence of five whites. The psycho-
567 logical state of the planter who, unmarried and alone, spent
571 his days without the companionship of a fellow-being who as
423 much as shared a common language with him may well be
563 imagined. Even where there were white overseers, the prevailing sense of caste was so strong that while these ate with the head of the estate, they did not live under the same roof, for they were subordinates and were treated as such. For his most constant companions the owner had his house-servants, unless he maintained a mulatto concubine who cooked his food and looked after his personal wants, shared his confidences, and reported to him any disaffection on the part of the Negro slaves. It is understandable that, having made his fortune, the planter did not delay his return to France, where, once back in Paris, he lived lavishly on the revenues from his estates; and letters in the Ministry of Colonies show the extent to which this phenomenon of absentee ownership characterized pre-Revolutionary Santo Domingo.[32]

175 Haiti being thought of as but an interlude in a man's life,
181 the loosening of moral tone so complained of in contemporary
563 works resulted, and with this went the many forms of display in which these colonists indulged and those other aspects of colonial custom which were so often ridiculed by European travelers of the period. The distance of Haiti from Paris, or, in a later period, the time which had elapsed since the French loss of Haiti, has, however, lent an enchantment to "Créole life" which is reflected in an idealized portrayal of this existence, much in the manner of the effusions on the graciousness and glamour of life in what is termed "the old South."[33] One

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cannot read the extended narrative of the young Comte de C***, reprinted by de Vassière, without questioning this myth of the idyllic life of the Haitian Créole, even though allowing for the disdain with which an exiled Parisian dandy of 1730 would regard the inhabitants of outlying possessions, and allowing also for the savory wit of the man, which undoubtedly led him to underscore the more diverting situations which he encountered.[24] 175 181 563

Mention must be made at this point of the two great divisions of the white population which, as the colonizing period continued, were created by the distinction between those born on the island and those who had migrated there. These divisions cut across the two categories of urban and country dwellers, both of which numbered Haitian-born and native European members. At the time of the French Revolution about three quarters of the whites on the island had been born outside the colony, while of those born in the colony, women comprised the major portion.[25] Haitian-born persons were known by the designation *Créole*, which, according to a definition of the period, included all those " who have first seen the light of day in Santo Domingo " and was, as it is today, a term employed in all the West Indies and in Louisiana.[26] This designation was by no means restricted to the whites, however, for there were Créole Negroes as well as Créole whites; at the present time in Haiti a distinction is even drawn between locally grown " créole " rice and that which is imported! 175 563

It is common knowledge that slavery not only affects those who are held in bondage, but deeply influences the master-class as well. In Haiti the role played by the institution of slavery in the formation of the character and personalities of Créole children brought up in a setting of servility, cupidity, brutality, and terror must have been of the utmost importance. The bad temper and domineering nature of Créole youths is commented on again and again by writers of the period. Owing to the unhealthy climate and the failure to 567 175 155 563 858 571

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563 567 175 155 858 571

maintain adequate hygienic conditions, the health of these children was usually poor, so that from earliest infancy they were spoiled by their parents and servants; their least wishes were gratified, and their least complaints immediately rectified so as to make them petty tyrants in their households. This tyranny was most often exercised over the family slaves. Regardless of the assiduous care these young despots received, and despite the adulation lavished upon their young charges, the Negro servants were seldom sufficiently prompt or adequate in their attentiveness to escape the punishments, often severe, that were meted out to them at the behest of their young masters. This tyranny extended to the play-life of the young Haitian-born white. Surrounded only by the slave children of the plantation, he commanded his contemporaries even more imperiously than his parents commanded the grown slaves.

> " Whatever he saw, he wanted, whatever was shown him he demanded; and if some fatality brought it about that one of his small companions resisted him and he became irritated, they would hurry from all sides in response to his cries and those of the young unfortunate, who, his color having destined him for submission, learned soon enough that he would be forced to give way, perhaps even being meted some punishment to penalize the disobedience of one who had not yet the instinct for servitude." [27]

175 563 567 571 [839]

Grown to manhood, the young Créole continued to act as master of all he surveyed. Imperious, quick-tempered, spoiled, his life lived in large part among slaves, when his sex drive stirred, he took what slave women pleased him. Eventually he married, to be tormented with the thoughts of the possible infidelity of his wife; the more tortured because of his extreme vanity and because, while demanding faithfulness from his spouse, he was continuing his affairs with his Negro women. [157] Yet he had some excellences of character, as well. " Frank,

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affable, generous perhaps to the point of ostentation, confi- 175 563
dent, brave, a sure friend and a good father " [28] — such are his 567
good points as set down by one who was perhaps surer-eyed 591
than others in seeing his deficiencies, though these traits seem [157]
to have concerned more his relations with his fellow-whites than those which affected his bearing toward his Negro slaves.

The young Créole women of this same environment were destined for early marriage — too early for their best development, whether physical or mental. Given to exacting the fulfillment of their slightest caprices, they were, like their men, creatures of passion. If they survived their first pregnancies, which as a result of too early marriages often came before they were physically in condition to support the rigors of childbirth, they soon lost their youthful allure and became the unattractive women of the type so maliciously described by the Comte de C***.[29] In such cases they frequently survived not one but several husbands. Their associations were chiefly with their Negro women slaves, who were full confidantes, sleeping in the same chamber with their mistresses and on occasion sharing informal meals with them, though they never ate at the same table. And because, by a fine turn of irony, these Negro women were often at the same time the concubines of the husbands, brothers, or sons of their mistresses, they were as often as not treated alternately with the greatest tenderness and the harshest brutality.[30]

Whatever the inner life of white Haitians, native-born or 175
Créole, outward ostentation was the rule. In the cities poorly 105
furnished houses were cared for by a numerous retinue of 563
uniformed retainers; " the supreme achievement for a Euro- 369
pean being to have himself served, he hires slaves while he 567
waits for the time when he can own them." [31] In the country,
too, life was lived on as lavish a scale as possible. This is not 175
the place to describe the houses of masters and slaves, or the 563
buildings needed for working sugar-cane or indigo or prepar- 567
ing coffee, or their distribution over the plantation, for nu- 105
342

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175 merous contemporary accounts, and most present-day works,
105 give both texts and illustrations which make the economy of
563 the plantation clear.[32] Though many stories of the magnificence
567 of plantation life are found in current works, writers
342 of the period seem to agree that but little attention was paid
to convenience. Inventories of the contents of houses show
175 that furnishings were at a minimum; a few chairs and small
105 tables in the sitting- and reception-rooms, beds and minor accessories
563 in the way of furniture in the bedrooms, dining-room
352 tables and chairs and a cabinet for dishes. These pieces were
usually built in the colony and made of native hard woods;
substantial, they were essentially plain. As Baron Wimpffen
remarked, " Taste, Sir, is still Creolian at Saint Domingo; and,
unfortunately, the Creolian is not the right taste, — it smells
too much of the *Boucan*." [33]

175 The table set was not distinguished. Meat, though the most
105 important dish at the principal meals, was poor, but, on the
567 other hand, fish, game, and wild fowl were excellent, and the
563 best of French wines were available.[34] Whatever the fare, however,
264 it was served in the grand manner, often on plate rather
[262] than chinaware, and by the many liveried house-servants
which every great establishment could boast. An account of
the mode of service has been preserved in the reminiscences
of one who, writing some years later of a repast served him in
1787, says: " There were many more of these domestics of both
sexes than there were diners. I could but admire their attention
to the smallest details of the service, the whiteness of their
clothing, and the beautiful kerchiefs in the Créole manner
elegantly arranged about the heads of the women. . . . But
[291] all of them moved about on bare feet; this was the distinctive
sign of slavery." [35]

175 As portrayed in contemporary works, Haitian white life is
181 seen to have been lived entirely in terms of material goods and
105 of display. Just as there was little intellectual life, so religion
777 was but a matter of form. One M. de Larnage, writing from
563

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Petit-Goave on 25 June 1743, complains that it is unbeliev- 175
able "what indifference the people of these districts have 105
toward spiritual matters."[26] So little attention was paid to the 181
rites of the Church that when the baptism of an infant was to 771
be performed, it often proved difficult to find a godfather who 563
had taken the sacrament, and many children were therefore [851]
never baptized. As might be expected, the churches were in a
bad state, often having no more than earthen walls and floors,
roofed with thatch, and being used as threshing-floors as well
as places of worship. The description which Père Labat has
given us of a church at Cap Français,[27] and of the manner in
which the communicants conducted themselves during such
services as were held, shows the decadence of the one religion
that had any place among the white inhabitants. The clergy, [793]
too, reflected this same decadence. For though the early libertines who posed as priests were later replaced by members of
such orders as the Jacobins, the Jesuits, and the Capucins, even
this did not end the scandals that, from the first days of the
establishment of the Catholic Church on the island, marked
its ministrations.

What impression must the Negroes have obtained from 17
their opportunities to observe the life of their masters? What 567
patterns of behavior, what moral codes, what concepts of the
way in which the Europeans regulated their own lives and, as
officials, regulated the lives of others, must have been stamped
on the minds of these Africans? That the present emphasis on [181]
the importance of wealth, or that a love of and demand for [369]
display, should characterize Haitian life of the cities today
is not strange. Nor is it difficult to comprehend how certain
other aspects of Haitian life that have so been underscored in
the last half-century by those who have written of the Haitians
should have developed from this initial stimulus — not to the
extent to which this emphasis would lead one to believe, to be
sure, but enough to give a basis for the exaggerations which
have been published.[28]

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17 105 Some of these charges may be reviewed. One, frequently met with and already mentioned, concerns the general lack of cleanliness and sanitation that marks the cities. As has been shown, this stems directly from the patterns of life which prevailed under French control. The matter of personal morals is also often discussed with anything but praise for Haitian custom. Quite aside from the polygamous tradition of Africa, the influence of which will be discussed later, it is only necessary to recall the example set for these slaves by the sex customs of the Créoles and other Europeans with whom they came into contact to see how the ideal of monogamic union would not be entirely convincing as one to be followed in all its implications. The failure of the Catholic Church to stamp out the African cults in Haiti, and the skepticism with which, as will be pointed out, the motivation of the priests is regarded by the Haitians must have been strengthened by the tradition of the misbehavior of those who were in charge of the religion into which baptism was mandatory, before the days of freedom.

17 66 105 The instability of Haitian political life, and the venality of judges and other officials have been stressed again and again in the writings of those who have passed judgment on Haiti. Yet one need but read of the readiness of the white colonists to revolt against the authority set over them by the mother country,[39] and of the manner in which during the French Revolution attempts to alleviate the position of the colored and Negro portions of the population were thwarted by the illegal political activities of the plantation slave-owners,[40] to understand at least some of the sources from which direct political action derives its sanctions. One need similarly but read comments in letters and books of the time concerning the corruption of the officials of the colony [41] to conclude that, since her independence, Haiti has in such respects but continued a tradition set by the rulers who governed the country before the Republic was established. Thus if the life of the Haitian

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Negro peasant of today presents aspects of harshness or instability, it would seem proper to ask how much of this might be ascribed to the examples which these Negroes were set by their masters, rather than unequivocally to assume inherent racial tendencies to account for them, as is so often done. 17 66 105

This, of course, is far from the whole story. For just as there were large numbers of colonists who were men of integrity and lived in accordance with the best traditions of their French heritage, so among the Negroes were many who sensed these deficiencies in the regime to which they had been enslaved, and held tenaciously to their African traditions, not only in religion, but in social, economic, and political phases, so that, when the time was ripe, these might in some measure be re-established. To approach the matter realistically, it must be recognized that just as the Africans in the islands represented numerous tribes having varying customs, and individual members of these groups possessed varying degrees of integrity and worth, so the French who came to live there and whose slaves learned of French culture from them represented not necessarily the flower of that culture, but were in the main derived from the extremes of French society, the unadjusted and maladjusted lower classes and the aristocrats. What was bequeathed by them to the Haitians, therefore, were those aspects of French civilization which, to the extent that they were accepted by the Negroes, are partially responsible not only for the graciousness, the hospitality, and the generosity of the Haitian of today, but also for the less pleasant aspects of the culture that have resulted from his historical development since independence. 178 105

CHAPTER III

WORKING THE AMALGAM

175 567 [illegible] 249 THE FIRST slaves brought to the New World — those Negroes needed, according to the familiar account, to replace the Indians who preferred death to bondage — reached Haiti in 1510.[1] The sanguine hope of the colonists that the labor of one Negro would be worth more than that of four Indians was, however, not borne out by experience, for the work of these slaves was far from satisfactory, and their death-rate was distressingly high.[2] Yet though they were found to be useless in the gold mines, their owners were more than compensated by the discovery that they made excellent laborers in the cultivation of sugar-cane and the making of sugar. So profitable was this, indeed, that Haiti, with the rest of the West Indies, came to be known as the "sugar islands," and it is recounted how "the magnificent palaces erected by Charles V at Madrid and Toledo were built solely from the revenues obtained from the monopoly of the crown on the importation of sugar from the Island of Espagnole."[3]

175 567 During these early times the fundamental rule of slavery in Haiti was laid down: "In all that has to do with slavery, custom is everything, the law is nothing."[4] In 1518 one Zuazo, a licentiate, writing to the King, stated that the control of Negro slaves depended entirely upon the treatment accorded them. "Some of those I found on my arrival were thieves,

while others had fled to the mountains; the first group I caused to be beaten, and cut off the ears of the others, and since then no complaint has been heard."[5] Charlevoix also tells of the brutal treatment of the early slaves; how the Negroes were given even less consideration than the Indians, since there was not only much greater difference in skin color between them and the whites than between the color of the Indians and the Europeans, but the added reason existed that 175 567

> " slavery, as far as the native Indians were concerned, was based solely on the right of the most powerful, whereas in the case of the Negroes, they having been bought and sold by their own people, it seemed that one need have less scruple in making them bear the full weight of their servitude."[6]

The rapidity with which the slave-trade grew, especially in the latter portion of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth, need not be stressed here. With the passage of the western part of the island into the hands of the French following the provisions of the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, and as a result of the picturesque but predatory activities of the buccaneers, who did much to demoralize the Spanish regime, French participation in the trade grew apace,[7] so that slightly more than a half-century later seven " companies " were engaged in carrying Negroes to the French possessions in the New World.[8] Though in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century Martinique was the best market, Haiti, because of her vast resources, came to absorb the greater part of the available slaves.[9]

From the earliest times most of the slaves were destined for work in the fields, but some were employed as house-servants. These latter had the greatest opportunities to learn the ways of the whites and, moreover, since many of the women were mistresses of their owners, not only did a mingling of traditions and modes of life result, but a merging of 175 563 567 357

175 563 562 [357]

the blood-streams of the two races as well. And though in the custom of French Santo Domingo, as elsewhere in the New World, even a suspicion of Negro ancestry was sufficient to cut a person off from social intercourse with white society, yet these mixed-bloods were to become an important factor in establishing the patterns of Haitian Negro tradition, just as their descendants were to exert no small influence in the development of Haitian culture after the establishment of independent Haiti.

Numerous terms designated the various degrees of crossing, some of which, surviving in present-day speech, are familiar to us, such as the words " mulatto " and " quadroon." But examining Moreau de St. Mery's painstaking analysis of the various possible amounts of crossing that could be recognized, reading his speculations regarding the smallest proportion of Negro blood that could be regarded as negligible, noting how he traces Negro blood to its last vestige, as in a cross which would give one part Negro as against 8,191 parts white, a telling impression is received of the great significance of race-crossing for the Haitians of that time.[10] Such words as *sacatra*, *griffe*, *marabou*, *métif*, and *mamelouc* not only gave information as to the amount of crossing represented in the persons designated by them, but even indicated which parent, father or mother, was white and which one was wholly or partially Negro. Crossing was by no means restricted to matings between white masters and their slave women, for records show that Negro men did not fail to hold an attraction for their white mistresses. Nor did all the sharpness with which the color-line was drawn prevent actual marriages between whites and persons of color. In such instances, however, the white [558] person was cast out from association with his fellow-Europeans, as the name applied to him, *mésallié*, sufficiently shows.[11]

Slavery cut across all these varying degrees of color, so that just as there might be free Negroes who were wholly African in descent, so there were "colored" folk who were slaves. As time went on, the lighter-colored slaves were usually employed as house-servants rather than field-hands, bringing about a continuous dilution of the Negro blood that flowed in these strains, and a lightening of their skins. And such was the prestige attached to light color that the mixed-bloods, even though slaves, felt themselves superior to free Negroes of undiluted African stock. This attitude derived from the fact that the lighter slaves were most often manumitted, particularly if they were the children of their owners, and that in other situations, when as slaves they gained the favor of their masters, they were permitted to engage in some remunerative enterprise with the proceeds of which they eventually might purchase their own freedom. These free people of color, or *affranchis*, formed an important part of the Haitian population in pre-Revolutionary times,[12] and played a principal role in the development of Haitian culture. It was through them that European civilization flowed, since because of the closeness of their contacts with the whites they were the instrument by means of which the aboriginal African heritage of the slaves was modified to produce the forms in which it is found in Haiti today.[13] 175 563 567 [178]

Yet for all the importance of the freed mixed-bloods in the attainment of Haitian independence and in the fixing of the patterns of Haitian culture, they, like the whites, were but relatively few in number, their strength being but from five to ten per cent of that of slaves.[14] In attempting to analyze the manner in which the present amalgam that is the civilization of Haiti was formed, it is consequently necessary to revert to a consideration of those who were in the majority, the full-blooded Negroes. The tribes from which these Negroes were principally derived have been indicated, together with the outlines of the civilizations of the region of Africa from which they were drawn. To this must be added, as has been for the whites with whom they came in contact, an analysis of the so- [162] 12 562 162 174

121 174 562 162 cial classes to which they belonged, as well as the circumstances of their enslavement, their treatment in Africa before shipment to the New World and during the voyage, their initiation into their new mode of life, and the manner in which they lived as slaves, since all of these facts had considerable bearing on the processes which shaped the behavior of their descendants who now inhabit the island.

171 567 The integrated political organization of West Africa has been described, as well as the important fact that the class stratification in that region was almost as fixed and its social implications almost as far-reaching as in France. Even the early writers recognized that not all slaves came from the same ranks of society, just as they understood that there were various ways in which enslavement could be achieved. Père Labat, who lived in the West Indies for many years, listed four classes from which slaves were drawn. First, he says, were those whose punishments against native law had been commuted to perpetual banishment — that is, to slavery " for the private profit of the kings "; second were the prisoners of war; third were those who, already the slaves of native princes or of those persons to whom they had been given by these princes, were sold to meet the need of their masters for money; while fourth, comprising the greatest proportion of the slaves, were those snatched from their homes by the marauding bands of robbers who, with the connivance of native rulers, carried on these raids to satisfy the demands of the European dealers.[14] This classification and others of the period, though generally accepted and repeated by later writers, tells little concerning the ranks of society from which the slaves were drawn, except as this may be inferred. For this one must go to present-day West Africa, where a lively tradition of the slave-trade has survived and offers valuable supplementary information.[15]

000 In the light of the existing traditions in Dahomey and Nigeria, it is evident that from the point of view of the African, Labat's four classes must be compressed into two — the

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captives and the criminals. Rarely, unless convicted of some crime, were the members of a tribe enslaved by their fellows, and while slave-raiding was carried on by small groups, especially by waylaying young people and abducting infants, slaves were customarily captured during the annual "wars" that were in reality but glorified man-hunts. For the Dahomeans, as a matter of fact, there were three categories of those enslaved. The largest consisted of prisoners of war, the second of criminals who had violated the law of the land, while the third was made up of political offenders. An analysis of each of these classes, especially the first and the last, will aid materially in understanding certain lines followed by Haitian Negro culture in its development.

If Dahomey again be taken as an example, we find that the reigning king of that country annually during the dry season made war against some group that bordered his ever-expanding kingdom. In accordance with African military strategy there was no declaration of war, so that the surprise attacks were usually successful and netted a large number of prisoners, particularly since all persons found in the region attacked were taken captive. Many of them were retained to work the plantations of the king and his chiefs, under overseers who did not stop at brutality in obtaining such results for their absentee employers as would bring them favor. Others, not only in Dahomey but elsewhere in West Africa where centralized governments existed, were held near the compound of the king, to be offered on ceremonial occasions as sacrifices to the royal ancestors. Those remaining were sold to the slavers, and inasmuch as little distinction as to class was made among those who were to be sold or who were to be put to work in native fields or held for sacrifice, this largest group of slaves, combining in some measure the last three categories mentioned by Père Labat, drew impartially from all classes of African society.

The criminals, never more than a small proportion, may be dismissed with but little notice; even then, the fact that the definition of the word "criminal" varies from one society to another and from one period to the next, suggests that this classification is not, of itself, of great significance. No greater portion of African "criminals" were guilty of antisocial acts, certainly, than were those, let us say, so classified in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France and England. For just as Europe shipped debtors to the New World as criminals, so to the Africans an illicit love-affair with one of the wives of a man of rank, or failure to carry out some royal command to the satisfaction of the monarch, was a "criminal" offense, punishable as severely as was embezzlement or robbery.

Political prisoners were usually those who failed to agree to the succession of a king and, less frequently, those who intrigued against the power of a reigning monarch. In West Africa there was no assurance that the eldest son of the first wife of the king would inherit his throne. In Dahomey the king chose from among all his sons; elsewhere the choice was at times made by the advisers to the late ruler. Whatever the method, there was often dissatisfaction among the other potential heirs, and Dahomean tradition has it that this sometimes resulted in rebellion, which, whether successful or not, brought about the enslavement of many persons. For if the revolt was suppressed, the claimant to the succession and all those who had supported him, with the members of their households, were "banished perpetually for the profit of the king," while if the efforts of the insurrectionists succeeded, the supporters of the ruler who was replaced, as well as their families, suffered a like fate. The existence of this tradition would contradict the usual view that the New World slaves did not include leaders and men of position, even if the observations of contemporary writers were not available to negate the assumption, as, for example, the following quotation from Moreau de St. Mery:

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> "The Mina Negroes have even been seen to recognize princes of their country . . . prostrating themselves at their feet and rendering them that homage whose contrast to the state of servitude to which these princes have been reduced in the colony offers a striking enough instance of the instability of human greatness." [33]

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Yet another group of Africans played a significant role in determining the trends Haitian Negro culture was to take. It is a commonplace among those who have studied New World Negro life that African religion has shown greater resistance to white influence than any other phase of African culture. And to explain this one must again turn to native African tradition. The beginnings of the West African monarchies, whose ruling dynasties eventually came to command great stretches of land, were in tiny principalities that continually "warred" against each other. Tradition has it that the most intransigent of the conquered were the priests of the indigenous local cults, who, because of their activities, were punished with what native idiom still terms "banishment." In the New World these intractable priests continued their rites for their fellow-slaves and instructed the next generation so their knowledge would not be lost to the people. Before their enslavement they had been men of power and influence, and this pattern, carried over in all its strength in the New World, continued them and their descendants as natural leaders. Hence, wherever the opportunity presented itself to strike for liberty, they invoked the spiritual forces to reinforce the power and courage of the military leaders who, like them, had been sold into slavery because their countries had been conquered, or because they had rebelled against the succession in their own lands.

178 [illegible]

The composition of the slave population as inferred from these traditions is thus seen to be somewhat different from

[illegible]

157 162 178 567 174 that commonly assumed, since the conclusion is inescapable that, if anything, the slaves formed a group whose aboriginal types showed a weighting on the upper end of the African social scale rather than an overwhelming proportion of the less desirable members of society. Such an assumption goes far in explaining how the "slave psychology" generally attributed to Negroes of the New World was anything but a real part of their inner lives, and makes as well for an understanding of the extent to which the Negroes suffered their slavery with a constantly active discontent that is rarely given proper recognition in the study of the history of the period, and to which the drive toward freedom and the traditions of their native land were kept alive despite the restraints imposed by the masters.

175 567 Once in the net of the slavers, however, the status of any individual mattered but little, for to the European dealers each Negro was but an added unit of cargo. All last traces of his dignity as a human being were taken from him;[18] in the grants for earlier slaving operations, and in the manifests of the ships of that time, slaves were not even invoiced as human beings, but as "pieces of the Indies" — fractions of the perfect slave, who was conceived as having a height of seven *quartas* of a little more than ten inches each. Under this practice, the stature of each slave, child or adult, having been recorded, the total length of the members of the cargo was divided by the requisite number, and thus reduced to so many of these "pieces of the Indies," the actual number of human beings in the cargo not figuring.[19]

It is unnecessary to detail the horrors of the passage to the New World, for the story has been too often told. One can but conjecture what its effect on those subjected to it must have been, especially when it is viewed as an introduction to their contact with the Europeans who were to be their masters. That the mortality on the voyage was high is well known, but death encountered while the shackled slaves passed the dan-

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gerous bar of the African coast in the native canoes, which often overturned in the surf, is seldom mentioned in the literature of the slave-trade. Yet this was perhaps as great a cause of loss of life as the hardships of the journey to the coast or even the voyage across the Atlantic.

Arrived at their destination, the slaves were given a period of rest so that they might be in the best of condition when they were placed on the market, to be inspected much as the more costly horses or heads of cattle were appraised. Sometimes the period between the voyage and their purchase was a lengthy one, since they were often held in " warehouses " for extended periods in order to regulate the market. Eventually, however, they were disposed of and, taken to the plantations, branded with the mark of the new master.[30] Induction into plantation life followed a fairly definite pattern: the new slave was first of all " introduced " to the principles of Christianity through an interpreter and then, according to his age, placed in one of the three work-groups which every plantation of any size possessed; the " great " one, composed of the most vigorous men and women; the second, to which the adolescents, the feeble, and the women who were nursing their infants were assigned; and the third, made up of children, who, under the watchful eye of an elderly woman, gathered forage. For the second and third groups the work was not too strenuous, but the members of the " great " work-group labored almost without rest except for the two hours a day allowed for meals and the few hours at night for sleep. And while conditions varied from plantation to plantation, the many contemporary accounts of the unrelenting manner in which the slaves were compelled to work at top speed testify to the harshness of the regime.[31] Small wonder that Charlevoix, contemplating the life of the slaves, wrote the moving paragraphs he composed concerning the hardships of their existence, and the slight compensations their labor afforded them.[32]

Despite the obvious fact that under such conditions the con- [178]

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178 tinuation of African cultural traditions was not easy, certain
562 things did persist. While the material facts of the life of the
[177] slaves was at once subordinated to European patterns — in
dress and implements and to a certain extent in housing, for
example [23] — yet in other matters they could live as they had
lived in Africa. Thus one account of the time, quoted by
[461] de Vassière,[24] tells how the slaves carried on communal hoeing,
[533] timing their strokes to the rhythms of songs that begged
some favor of their visitor, or to songs of praise (and, when
the white observer was not present, undoubtedly also singing
songs of derision), in the characteristic African fashion that,
as will be seen, has survived in Haitian peasant life to this
day. Similarly their traditions of cooking, of eating, of fixing
the time for their meals (despite St. Mery's comment that
"the Negro has no other rule of eating than the demands of
his appetite"), of respect for their elders; their attitudes
toward death and their rituals of burial, their dances, their
songs, and, above all, their non-Christian religious beliefs, all
continued to be stamped with the mark of Africa.[25] On the
17 other hand, opportunities to learn and imitate French customs
567 were by no means neglected, for the prestige of the masters
filtered through the ranks of the slaves until it reached
even the field-hands, for the nearer in service the Negro was to
the person of his master, the more Europeanized was his behavior
and the prouder he was and the more he exploited his
opportunities to follow European patterns of habit.[26] Not
only did the house-servants imitate French dances,[27] but we
are told how in Martinique, for example, all the slaves were
taught these figures.[28] In the field of religion, also, the efforts
[997] of the Church to capitalize the royal edicts which made baptism
of the slaves compulsory were far from vain, at least
in so far as the outward manifestations of their acceptance of
the faith were concerned. Writings of the time, however, do
not omit comment on the discouragement of the missionizing
Fathers who seriously undertook this task, because too often

17 567 797 the baptism of their converts was followed by serious lapses from the faith, especially under conditions of stress.[29]

567 782 175 One of the most revolting aspects of the institution of slavery, wherever found, is the cruelty with which the suppression of human individuality is prosecuted. In this the French colony of Santo Domingo was no exception, as the list of more ingenious punishments, aside from the more usual ones such as whipping, which were devised to keep the slaves in line, demonstrates.[30] What is more important here are the defenses the Negroes built up against them. Recourse to suicide was especially common, and though the popularly accepted explanations for this range between the desire of the slave to destroy himself because he knew he was valuable property of his master, and the conviction that suicide was one way of achieving his return to the African homeland,[31] there is no reason to assume that, following African tradition, the belief that the ghost of a helpless slave could through suicide become powerful for evil and thus wreak his vengeance did not also figure.[32] [669] But equally widespread in all the New World were the allied weapons of revolt and escape.

175 567 669 Both in the experience of the individual slaves and in the history of New World slavery this tendency to revolt began early. In the former case, many tales are told of how on the march to the African coast, or in the slave barracoons, or on board the slave-ship, the possibility of a desperate dash for freedom had always to be guarded against.[33] Concerning the latter, it is not generally known how early in the history of Negro slaving revolts did occur. The Negro slave-trade began with shipments of slaves to Haiti in 1510; the first slave uprising in Haiti, in 1522, thus took place only twelve years after the commencement of the traffic.[34] In the New World possessions of Spain eleven other rebellions are recorded between the years 1522 and 1553, of which those of 1533, 1537, and 1548 occurred in Santo Domingo.[35] During the following century two revolts took place, one at Port de Paix in 1679

175 and another in 1691. The object of this latter rebellion was
567 to massacre all the whites in the district, but it was discovered
669 before the uprising could be effective, and its leaders were executed. Still another incipient revolt in the region of Cap Français was put down in 1704.[36]

In the main, however, there were too few opportunities for united action on the part of the slaves from any considerable area to permit the idea of a general revolt to germinate and grow into action; such rebellions as occurred in the years that followed were local affairs, and were principally the result of specific abuses. Yet the fear of them was always with
[994] the planters, and of this fear the *vodun* cult, characterized by St. Mery as being potentially "a terrible weapon" in the hands of the leaders of the cult, was the symbol and crystallizing agent.[37] That there was no lack of realization of the danger to the colonists from slave uprisings is made clear in letters of the period written to France; as early as 1685 M. de Cussy, reporting to the Minister of Colonies in Paris, stated: "In the Negroes we possess a formidable domestic enemy," while a hundred years later an officer of the armies of the King who was also a plantation-owner in Haiti expressed the opinion that "a colony of slaves is a city under constant threat of assault; there one walks on barrels of powder." [38]

175 More frequently, however, the expression of protest took
567 the form of *marronage,* of running away to the hills, a phenomenon not restricted to Haiti, since in other regions of the New World, notably Jamaica and Dutch Guiana, the runaways maintained themselves so successfully that they were accorded their independence by formal recognition, as was also done in Haiti in 1784.[39] Figures on the extent to which slaves made off into the mountains tell the measure of their desperation; in 1720 alone, a thousand Negroes gained their freedom in this manner; in 1751, at least 3,500. Some of the leaders of these bands were men of great ability, and the depredations they engaged in caused serious losses to the planters

in the regions where they operated. The most renowned was Macandal, a "Guinea" Negro, who was finally apprehended and executed in 1758.[40] His name lives today in Haitian peasant tradition, where folkloristic versions of his exploits as one of the earliest of the liberators are still recounted. The pages in St. Mery which tell how the strength of the bands in the mountains behind Croix-des-Bouquets necessitated a constant augmentation of the militia on duty there, is additional evidence of the success of these runaways. The same author's description of a group operating in the parish of Jacmel, found in 1785 to number among its members men more than fifty years of age who had been born in the freedom of the mountains, shows how long the escaped Negroes were able to maintain themselves without capture.[41] 175 567

The very tradition of *marronage* was important. Psychologically, it held out to the slaves a hope, more than ephemeral, of escaping their servitude, and in consequence allowed them to maintain an attitude of mind that kept many of them from becoming a prey to despair. From the point of view of the growth of Haitian culture, moreover, the groups of runaway slaves offered a ready means for the continuation of African traditions and patterns of behavior. Though but few descriptions of the manner of life led by the fugitives in their mountain encampments are to be had, it is apparent that in order to maintain confidence in their own powers of resisting capture and re-enslavement the runaways guarded assiduously all memory of African belief and practice, while even in the material aspects of their existence they tended to revert to aboriginal modes of life. Finally, however, and most important for the future course of Haitian history, was the training of these runaways obtained in the ways of warfare, and the continuation of the warrior tradition among the Negroes. This is one of the reasons why in 1791, when Boukman and his followers stirred the first general slave revolt in the north, the blacks were ready; also when in the course of 185 567 669 [178]

175 569 669 the development of European history the French Revolution sharpened the latent antagonisms between the various classes of whites in the colony, between the whites and the free persons of color, and between masters and slaves, the way had been prepared for the operations of the great military geniuses, Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, through whose leadership the freedom of Haiti was finally achieved.

175 It is not necessary here to give, even in outline, the course of Haitian history during this period of rebellion and afterwards, when Haiti was welded into a single Republic, for this has been often recounted.[48] Nor is it of importance here to continue the well-known political history of the Republic, with its many rebellions, and its wars with the Spanish portion of the island that finally resulted in the formation of the Republic of Santo Domingo; with the brief existence of the "empire" of Faustin I; and with the culmination of this history in what has been called a period of anarchy that brought about the occupation, so recently terminated, of Haiti by the American Marines.[49] Other questions, which concern the social history of independent Haiti, have been given less attention, and only tantalizing hints of their answers appear in the writings of those who have treated of the developing country. How were the impulses toward the mingling of Haitian and French aspects of culture, set in motion during the period of slavery, working out during this time? What influences dominated the scene, once the whites had been finally eliminated? What mechanisms permitted the African traditions brought by the slaves to hold their vitality? It is as through a haze that one glimpses the inner development of Haitian culture after independence; and the glimpses are the dimmer when comparison is made with the many clear and detailed descriptions of the earlier life of the island.

175 114 It is only by a close reading of the works of such travelers and foreign officials as Hanna, Mackenzie, St. John, and Hazard, that any information of this kind can be obtained. The

attitudes of these writers were in the main far from sympa- 175
thetic toward Haiti, and their interests extended but little 114
to the customs of the great masses of Haitians. That the [567]
fear of slavery was still alive in the early part of the nineteenth
century is apparent from an incident related by Mackenzie;[44]
that, some decades later, the sense of racial differences continued to exist is evident from folk-sayings about the characteristics of whites, mulattoes, and Negroes recorded by St.
John.[45] The concept of rank seems to have maintained itself [565]
in its full flavor, with no lack of social classes in Haitian urban society and no lack of vigor in perpetuating the earlier prejudices of caste.

The majority of the population remained on the land, for 175
by 1830 the great estates had been completely broken up, and 178
were cultivated in the main by small concessionaires. The [423]
dress of these country inhabitants seems to have remained much as it had been under French control, and the emphasis on good manners that so marks African social intercourse had been retained to such an extent that St. John, no admirer of the Haitian people, was forced to remark upon it.[46] Markets which were conducted in African fashion had been established, and these were supplemented by itinerant peddlers.
The institution of *plaçage,* a reconciliation of African plural [595]
marriage with the monogamy of European custom, of which more will be said in a later chapter, was known in the early days of independence. The rites of birth and death were marked with their special ceremonies, and in both instances it can be seen that the African elements of the cultural heritage
were not being forgotten. Dancing continued as the principal [535]
form of recreation, and to the traditional dances, which still [177]
persist, were added European styles.[47]

Above all, African religious customs were being observed. 175
Vodun rites continued to flourish and magic was practiced as 178
in the days preceding independence, as is to be seen from the 77
notorious and all too often repeated tale of the "Congo bean 789

175 stew," which has continued current from the time of its publication
178 by St. John until today.[48] Yet African religious practices
771 were being constantly combated by the Catholic Church,
[789] for even in the period of revolt the priests had remained
175 largely unharmed, and when Christophe was elevated to the
178 throne, he appointed two archbishops. After the establishment
779 of the Republic, Catholicism continued as the State
795 religion, so that by the early nineteenth century, as Mackenzie mentions, thirty-eight clergy were active in Haiti, all under the control of the Bishop of Santo Domingo, and all presumably nominated and paid by the President of Haiti.[49] Though for a period there was an attempt to develop a national Church, the missionary work done during the colonial days left too strong a tradition of Catholicism to be overcome, and consequently a Concordat was signed with Rome in 1860, which has remained in effect ever since.[50]

178 Though the story of the cultural history of Haiti between 1804 and the present cannot thus be more than sketched, yet the background is known, and enough can be gathered from accounts of Haitian life during this interval to enable us to see that the varied cultural impulses were shaping the lives of the people throughout these years. With some understand-
[121] ing of the roots of the resulting culture in French and African traditions, then, let us once more turn to the valley of Mirebalais and consider the life of the Haitian peasant as it is lived today.

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PART II

THE DAILY ROUND

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CHAPTER IV

THE SETTING OF HAITIAN LIFE

SINCE the discovery by the Spaniards that the wealth of Haiti 241
lay rather in cultivating sugar than in the exploitation of 423
gold mines, its dominant economy has been agricultural. In [433]
the valley of Mirebalais, as elsewhere in the island, the small
cultivator holds the center of the economic stage. In the main [428]
he works his own land, inherited from his father or acquired [432]
through purchase. He may also cultivate additional plots of
ground which he rents, since much of the land expropriated [429]
when independence was gained was retained by the State and
today is leased for nominal fees.[1]

The life of the Haitian farmer, though hard, is simple and 512
self-contained. With but few exceptions, he supplies all his [433]
necessities, for he commands almost the entire range of tech-
niques known to his culture; hence Haitian economy shows
a lack of specialization that in the main is only relieved by
the sex division of labor. The day's work begins at dawn, the [272]
women rising before the men to prepare coffee, the invariable
drink of early morning. When finished with his breakfast, the
farmer goes to his field, where, except for the hottest hours, [241]
he works until sundown, his one meal being brought to him [264]
at about nine or ten o'clock in the morning. His wife mean- [252]
while occupies herself with her household tasks, pounding [241]
grain in her mortar or working in her
garden near by.

512 grain in her mortar or working in her garden near by. On
[443] market days she takes the produce of the family's fields to the
[438] town to sell. If she has young children, she cares for them
[855] while she does her other work, but when they are old enough,
[857] they help her about the house if they are girls, or, if boys, go
with their father to the garden. From time to time, when
[356] house repairs are needed or there are implements to be
[241] mended, the man spends a day at home getting these odd
jobs done; otherwise only serious illness in the family keeps
him from his fields.

512 The times for meals have not varied since the days when
264 Moreau de St. Mery described the eating-habits of the slaves.[2]
In addition to the mid-morning repast, the only other meal
is that eaten after the man returns from his field, this being
[562] the largest of the day. A wife does not sit down with her
[593] husband, but usually eats earlier with her small children and
holds herself ready to serve him upon his return, when, if he
is alone, she remains to tell him the day's gossip. Visitors are
[574] often present, for peasant etiquette demands that all comers
[576] be offered food, and, as one Haitian expressed it, "The peasant
would kill you for the insult if you did not share your
meal with him." Bedtime, as might be expected, is early.

512 On Sundays and on the days of festivals this routine is interrupted,
527 when, if the occasion is of sufficient importance
[796] and the habitation is not too far from town, the peasant and
his family attend mass. On Saturday nights there is usually a
vodun dance, when the early hour for retirement is forgotten
and all-night festivities precede Sunday's rest. On such days
[264] the principal meal is eaten at three or four o'clock in the
afternoon, and all the adults share it together, while at one
side the children are fed from the dishes of their parents in
response to the insistent repetition of the demand "*Ba'm pa'm* — give me my portion." *

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* This is an example of the elision characteristic of Haitian Créole, it being abbreviated from *Ba moin part moin* or, in French, *Donnez-moi ma part.*

The hard work of cultivating the fields is abated only during the dry season — the winter months of December to February — though even during these months there is no dearth of tasks about the house which must be cared for, such as repairs of various sorts and, above all, rethatching. There is, however, also more time for recreation than at other seasons, so that throughout the countryside there are dances and cock-fights. With February, however, work in the fields must be resumed. 221 241

The Haitian farmer does not practice any formal rotation of crops, but continues to plant a given crop in the same field until the harvest becomes perceptibly smaller than in former years, when a change is made to another type of produce. Later, when the same phenomenon is again observed, a third crop may be planted, but sooner or later the land is "put to rest," in which case it either is allowed to lie fallow or is planted with cotton, which is not thought of in the same category as other crops, but is held to be a tree, and, like other trees that of themselves spring up in a fallow field, is believed to give strength to the exhausted earth. A field of this kind remains outside cultivation as a "fallen garden" for four or five years, and the animals are allowed to enter freely and graze in it until it has become a "new garden" again. 241 [311]

If a field is to be made out of hitherto unworked land, or ground which has lain fallow for several years is to be cultivated once again, the work is begun by cutting down the trees. The twigs are heaped preparatory to burning them, and the larger branches and the tree-trunks are used to make fences. After the dried leaves and branches have been burned, the field is cleared of small brush, and is then ready for its initial hoeing, which, according to the crops to be planted, is sometimes delayed until some months later. Usually, however, after two or three rains have cooled and softened land that has been burned over, work continues on it. The hoeing is the hoeing is

241 476 done by the owner himself only if the field is very small; otherwise one of the co-operative work-groups that form such an important element in Haitian rural economy must be called.

The regulation of communal labor in Mirebalais, though extremely informal, is none the less effective. There are three or four types of such organizations, none of which requires a large outlay of funds on the part of the one whose land is being worked, and only one of which, the "mutual association," has any restriction as to membership. In this last case, [461] three or four or five men agree to work for each other a given number of hours, rotating their working period of three hours or half a day in the fields of each of the parties to the agreement. The other co-operative groups vary principally as to their size and the time of day when their work is carried on. The smallest is the *mira,* which consists of perhaps half a dozen or ten men who come to help a neighbor in his work, and labor from early morning until about the middle of the morning. A somewhat larger group, who work from about this time until midday, is known as a *coup de main.* Finally, there is the *combite,* the Mirebalais form of the characteristic organization for mutual self-help known elsewhere in Haiti as the *Société Congo.*[3]

241 461 476 Though strenuous physical labor is involved in the work of the *combite,* for the Haitian it symbolizes recreation and enjoyment — the stimulus of working with one's fellows, the pleasure of gossiping with friends, and the partaking of the feast which marks the climax of the day. All this makes the occasion one to be anticipated and enjoyed, and no one witnessing ten or fifteen men on horseback, each with a hoe over his shoulder, shouting and laughing as they clatter by at full gallop, can fail to sense their eager desire to arrive at their destination, a near-by *combite.*[4]

When a man or a woman needs help in preparing a field — for women, particularly those who sell in the market, may often become wealthy and large cultivators — a request is

made of key-men in the district informally called *chefs d'esquade.* They have the reputation of being those to whose call a number of men, perhaps a dozen, perhaps two or three times that many, will respond and come to give the aid that 241 461 476
is desired. Such a person is given a " bouquet " — a bottle of *clairin* — which insures the appearance of himself and his group on the date set. [431]
A *combite* may be held at any time during the week except Sundays, which are dedicated to rest, and Tu[illegible]ys (in earlier times Mondays), when tradition holds a person must be free to work his own fields and care for tasks needed to be done at his own house. There is no requirement in either law or custom to respond to the call for communal work, and the larger landowners, who usually reside in the towns, rarely participate in a *combite.* So great is the pleasure derived from work of this sort, however, and so living is the realization among the peasantry of its potential benefits, that a man hesitates before he refuses to take part in a *combite* to which he has been summoned. Sometimes a man who has been faithful in his attendance at *combites* and has worked well at them falls ill during the time for planting or for clearing his ground of underbrush or for hoeing. In such case a *combite* is summoned, and even though this man is unable to offer the usual feast, his services are remembered and the men work with a will to insure the proper preparation of his ground.

The scene in a field where a large *combite* is at work is an arresting one. The men form a line, with a drummer in front of their hoes. The *simidor,* who leads the singing as he works with the others, adds the rhythm of his song to the regular beats of the drum, thus setting the time for the strokes of the 241 461 476 534
implements wielded by the workers. This drum, slung about the neck of the drummer, is of the European form, never the hollowed-out African type that figures in religious rites. [177]
Its sound can carry far, however, and thus it not only beats the time for the hoes, but notifies all concerned that the *combite*

241 is under way. The size of the *combite* is judged by the number
461 of drums and *lambi,* or conch-shell horns used, for where two
476 or three of either are required, an especially large group of
534 workers is usually assembled. It may be observed in passing
that it is undoubtedly the sound of this *combite* drum, heard in the mountains or through the brush by travelers, that has so often been mistaken for the " mysterious booming " of the *vodun* drums.[8]

241 The preparation of the food is the work of the women of
524 the household giving the *combite,* aided by their female rela-
252 tions and the wives of friends and neighbors. This is no small
476 task, for goats and even a bullock may be killed to feed a
large *combite,* while in addition other dishes to go with the meat must be cooked. Each woman is given charge of a great pot and does her best to see to it that an appetizing dish is ready for the men when their work is done. While the food
476 is being cooked, the real object of the *combite,* the clearing
241 of the field, is being pursued. A *chef d'esquade,* usually with
461 a small group, begins the afternoon's labor, and, being a fast
worker, he himself sets the pace. As more men arrive, he walks about, encouraging the constantly increasing number of men in their efforts, seeing to it that the tempo originally set is continued, and when necessary picking up a hoe to
[626] restore a lagging rhythm. Occasionally the *chef d'esquade* will
stand in front of the men to make sure that all keep together, and if the lazy cannot be roused to work by direct order or through ridicule, he will drive them away.

The work progresses with incredible speed as the line moves down the field. In one case a *combite* of between fifty and seventy-five men completely cleared a field of several acres in a single afternoon, and this without undue effort or what appeared to be the expenditure of much energy. The flashing of the hoes in the brilliant sunlight accentuates the color of the scene; each implement is raised high above the head of the one who wields it, to be brought down at the proper in-

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ABOVE, *Preparing the food for a combite feast.*
BELOW, *Drums marking the beat for the hoes.*

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[facing p. 72]

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ABOVE, *One of the workers at a* combite.
BELOW, *A Haitian cornfield.*

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[facing p. 73]

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stant and in almost perfect accord with the hoes of all the other men in line. Pauses are frequent, and men often drop out of the line for a longer period of rest — even those not of the type laughingly called *majeurs,* who shirk their task and come to a *combite* principally to share in the feasting — and these, for the time being, join the singing with added verve. During the periods of rest, re-alignments are made and, if necessary, the direction of the line is changed; after a short time, however, the cry of the *simidor* rings out, the initial statement of a song is sounded, and as the chorus swings into the melody, the hoes rise again, the beat of the drum is begun, the plaintive notes of the *lambi* are heard, and the workers once more move down the field.*

Acting as the representative of the owner of the field to be cleared is a man who is called the *directeur.* If a large number of workers, a hundred or more, are assembled, he may divide them into two groups, assigning each half of the field, and then there is competition to see which group will first complete its allotted task. On such an occasion there would not only be more than one drum, but also more than one principal singer, or *simidor,* and the songs would thereupon have improvised words boasting of the prowess of the winning side, and ridiculing its opponents. The " director " also apportions the food, for it is customary to follow the rule which holds that since not all workers are equally eager or competent, so the rewards should not be the same for all. The shirkers are well known. They come but a little before sunset, or, arriving earlier, dawdle, walking about with their hoes and accomplishing but little during the afternoon. The lack of enthusiasm of these *majeurs* for work does not escape the " director," for though all who come to the *combite* must be fed, such men receive relatively little; while those who have worked the hardest not only are rewarded with dishes heaped with especially choice morsels of meat, but often find several sous when they reach the bottom of the dish.

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461 The *combite* songs are distinctive in Haitian music for
476 their melodic quality. Sung in unison, as is characteristic of
533 most forms of Negro music, they contain the statement of
a theme by the leader and a response from a chorus, so that the contrast between this great volume of sound from the chorus and the solo voice of the *simidor* is singularly effective. It is not the melodic qualities alone that make these songs so
476 appealing to the Haitians, however. At the *combite* a man
533 not only learns all the gossip of the day, but enjoys learning
461 and singing the songs which caustically comment on the
626 shortcomings of neighbors, or evaluate the hospitality of those
203 who have called *combites,* or detail scandal, phrased with
sufficient directness to allow the reference of the song to remain clear, but warily, so as not to give the individual pilloried ground for direct recrimination. The *simidor* is thus a person to be feared, since in addition to his ability as a singer and a leader of song, he is also an outstanding improviser. As one Haitian expressed it, "The *simidor* is a journalist, and every *simidor* is a Judas!"

476 One or two examples of these songs will make clear their
533 favor among a people to whose natural love of gossip is added
539 a patterned relish for oblique public statement of individual
461 shortcomings. The first comments on a miserly *combite* host:
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À tè!	Down!
Moin dit, messieurs,	I say, messieurs,
Moin p'ralé nan combite ça-é	I went to that *combite*
Moin pas mangé.	[But] I did not eat.
Moin allé, moin pas 'joinne un grogue	I went, but I found no drink
Pour moin bwè.	To drink.
Assé-a! En é!	Enough! Up!
Moin dit, messieurs,	I say, messieurs,
M'allé nan combite ça-é	I went to that *combite*

Moin pas joinne mangé	[But] I found no food
Pou' m'mangé.	To eat.

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Another song refers to a pungent bit of local gossip, which, though known to everyone, concerned an affair that precluded the mention of names. This is usually the case, for it is not ordinarily deemed wise to make specific references; yet this must not be thought of as an invariable rule, as is shown by the fact that a number of these songs were recorded where names were mentioned with great freedom. Thus in Mirebalais as elsewhere, circumstances must govern cases; the composer of the following short song did not feel it politic to do more than recall the case:

Ca va reglé,	This will be arranged,
En é, o!	Up, o!
Affai' cousine germaine	The affair of a first cousin
A'c cousin germain.	With her first cousin.

Reference is also made to an impending quarrel where a suspicion of magic practices entered:

Moin dit, Juda,	I say, Judas,
Allé l'église;	Go to the church;
Quand ou apè tourné	When you return
Ou a quitté moin tranquille, o-o;	You will leave me in peace, o-o;
Si ou allé l'église,	If you go to the church,
Ou apè quitté moin tranquille, o-o.	You will leave me in peace, o-o.

Still another song is a challenge, for in it the singer boasts that he is the equal of the man figuratively designated in it, and will cause trouble if resisted:

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À tè!	Down!
M'apè mandé qui moune	I ask what person
Qui en dedans caille là.	Is in that house.

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Compère répond':	My friend replies:
"C'e' moin qui avec cousine moin."	"It is I who am with my cousin."
Assé-é!	Enough!
Moin en dedans déjà.	I am already inside.
En é-é-o!	Up, o!
Nan point taureau	No bull
Passé taureau.	Is better than [this] bull.
En é-o!	Up, o!

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Finally, there may be cited a composition which complains against a shirker who comes and eats, but does little work:

Samba, é-é,	Samba, *é-é,*
Moin vé ou malhonnet,	I see that you are a dishonest man,
Tonnèrre!	*Tonnèrre!* *
Moin planté maïs moin,	I plant my maize,
L'année rive,	The year rolls round,
Moin planté mangé,	I plant food,
Ou apè managé li.	You eat it.
En é-é-o!	In the air!
Moin planté zaboca,	I plant avocados,
Ça pou' ou mangé,	They are for you to eat,
Ou malhonnet-o.	You are a dishonest man-o.
Tonnèrre!	*Tonnèrre!*

241 The field cleared and hoed, the work of planting begins. This is carried on in accordance with a well-defined calendar of agriculture, which takes as its starting-point the beginning of the rains. Maize, which matures quickly, is the first crop, and is planted during the latter part of March or early in April, unless the rains are delayed, when it is planted later that month. Congo peas, which mature less rapidly, are put

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* *Tonnèrre,* "thunder," is a Haitian-French oath; the original is retained because in translation its force is lost.

in at the same time, while calabashes and melon vines are 241
planted where the ash of the fires that consumed the cleared brush can fertilize them. Rice, which grows some four months before it matures, is planted between May and August in special patches reserved for this crop. Millet, planted in July, August, and September, can be harvested in January. Potatoes and manioc are put in the earth the latter quarter of the year and are harvested during the next dry season. Bananas, according to their species, are planted between April and September. Red beans, which mature twice a year and are cultivated high on the mountains surrounding the valleys, where it is cool, are planted in January and February and in August and September; they are harvested in June and January.

Sugar-cane is almost as important today as it was in the earliest days of Haitian agriculture. It is planted from May to July and gathered a year later, two fields being necessary if an annual crop is to be harvested. Once the cane is in the ground, however, it gives crop after crop without the need of preparing the fields or planting new shoots each year. Yams [427]
and *malangan* are cultivated on the mountainsides, the land often being worked by a system of share-cropping whereby a farmer who lives in the valley but owns mountain land employs a near-by peasant to work for him, providing him with the necessary supplies and entering into an agreement that the crop will be divided equally between them. This system, however, is said by the landowning Haitians to be unsatisfactory, since there is no way to verify the yield without spending an excessive amount of time. The Haitian farmer grows other produce: cabbage, squash, onions, garlic, peanuts, peppers, papaya, and spices, while the trees near the houses give coconuts, oranges, avocados, mangos, guavas, and other fruits.

Crops are not planted during the first quarter of the moon, 241
the preferred time in Mirebalais being from eight days after 821
the new moon until the full moon. It is held that anything

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planted at other times will spoil. Similarly, millet and maize must not be harvested during these periods, or small insects will eat the grain.[9] "No crop whose root is used for food may be planted during the forbidden phases of the moon," say the educated cultivators also, citing experiences of their own or of their neighbors who, being skeptical, planted their potatoes or other tubers during the wrong phase of the moon, only to have them completely spoil. In some instances not only the phases of the moon, but entire months are held unpropitious for planting. Thus July is regarded as a "weak" month for planting potatoes and plantains, while April, May, June, and August are preferred ones.

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As in all Negro cultures, the Haitians dare not ignore the supernatural powers that rule the universe, where the question of getting a living is concerned. In the valley of Mirebalais, if the land where a field is to be made has a stream, a cock must be sacrificed to the spirit that resides in it, together with oil, peas, and some non-intoxicating drink. In making the offering, protection is asked against those who might steal from the field or injure it:

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> "*Maître Source, moin mandé pou' ou gadé jardin moin vini fait ici. Cé pas pou' ou laissé méchant, malfaiteur contrarié tout ça moin mété nan terr'a. Si moin bien récolté, moin va ba ou un pile mangé.* — Master of the Stream, I pray you to protect the garden I have just made here. Do not permit any evil designing person to harm all that I have put into the ground. If I harvest well, I will give you much food."

An invocation such as the following might also be pronounced on this occasion:

> "*Jesu Christ, les Saints, Marassa, les Morts: M'ap' travaillé; m'ap' planté graines-là. Pou' fai'l donné pou' moin, pou' m' join, pou' m' bai' Mystères, les Saintes, les Marassa, les Morts.* — Jesus Christ, Saints, Twins, the

> Dead: I have worked; I have planted this seed. Make it 241
> yield for me, that I may make offerings to the Mysteries, 782
> the Saints, the Twins, the Dead." 539

At the entrance to the field the cranium of a horse, a mule, 241
or a burro may be erected on a pole as magic against evil, and 789
a wooden cross to which limes are attached may also be raised to protect against any expression of envy that might place a spell upon the growing plants. Finally, if there is any reason to believe that evil magic may have been invoked against the owner, a *hungan*, or *vodun* priest is summoned to make a charm to ward it off, and, with a little ceremony, he inters this charm in the middle of the garden or at its entrance.

In addition to this, first fruits must be given as an offering 241
to the supernatural forces whose goodwill has permitted a 782
bountiful yield, particularly in the case of staple crops such as maize and rice. As the first heads of maize are brought in, they are roasted, and the kernels are cut from the cobs. The
head of the household then throws them to the four cardinal [823]
points either in the garden or before his house, and as he does [539]
this, he pronounces an invocation such as the following:

> "*Jesu Christ, les Saints, les Marassa, les Morts: M' jet' maï' bai' ou, c'est pou' toujou' m' gagne bai' ou, et pou' m' gagne courai' pou' travai' a'c p'tit' moin, a'c femme moin, a'c parent' moin, a'c toute famille-a. Conserve m' pou' m' pas malade, pou' m' toujours join pou, m' bai' ou.* — Jesus Christ, the Saints, the Twins, the Dead: I throw maize for you, that I may always have some to give, that I may gain courage [strength] to work, and also my children, my wife, my relations, and all my family. Care for me that I do not fall ill, so that I may always have [something] to give you."

After this ritual the new crop is available to its owner for whatever use he may care to make of it.

241 782 The first of the rice-harvest is pounded in a mortar. A chicken is killed, or, if the farmer is a man of some means, he may offer two chickens, which are stewed together with red beans. The rice, cooked separately, is put on one platter or in a calabash and the stew in another, and these are taken to the field, where they are cast to the four quarters of the earth. Some of this is also given to the spirit residing in any stream [778] [824] which may be on the property. In addition, sacred trees are rewarded for their care over the field with some of this food placed at the foot of each, but only after they have demonstrated their merit by a successful yield. A prayer of thanks, [539] couched in terms such as these, is next pronounced:

> "*Tout ça quitté. Aidé moin à travailler durant l'année, quitté ba moin force, courage. Moin bien content jodi-a, main ça moin porté ba-ou, c'e pou' ca toujou' bon. Ba moin force l'année pou' moin travaille plus l'année prochain. Merci.* — All this remains [here for you]. Help me to work during the year, give me strength and courage. Today I am well satisfied; here is what I bring you that all may always be well with me. Give me strength this year that I may work more next year. Thank you."

The family and their friends who may be present then return to the house and eat the remaining food.

241 782 262 It is also held dangerous to eat yams until the spirits are given the first of the new crop that comes to hand.[1] This is true even though a person may not himself be a farmer, but purchases his yams in the market. Unless this is done: "*Cap' malade, cap' tué même. Marassa kèmbé 'ou, morts, too, et mystères.* — You can become ill, you can even die. Twins will seize (molest) you; the dead, too, and the *mystères.*" The ceremony occurs during November or December, and in addition to the "Guinea" yams — for this ceremony is not performed for the great coarse yams — it is necessary to have imported dried salt fish, fish from Haitian waters which are dried

in Port-au-Prince, native or "créole" rice, red beans, and olive oil. The rice and beans are cooked separately, as are the yams and the two kinds of salt fish, each being seasoned with oil, salt, and pepper. The ordinary plates or calabashes on which food is offered the *loa*, or African deities, and the characteristic special double plates used in the twin cult, are prepared by rubbing them with olive oil. When the food is ready, it is placed in the proper containers in a closed room, and the family gather and say prayers of the Church — the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Credo — after which the *loa*, the twins, and the dead are called to come and eat. From midday until after sunset the room remains unopened, so that these beings may partake of the offerings placed there for them. Finally, when darkness has fallen, the family enter, and the food, whose essence is believed to have been consumed by the spirits, is eaten. 241 782 262

At times when a garden yields but little, the owner may suspect that black magic is the cause. He thereupon tries to recall any of his neighbors who might have occasion to feel envious of him, or those with whom he may have quarreled. He does nothing overt at this time except to watch for signs of hostility on the part of the suspect, but when the time for the next planting arrives, he not only obtains a strong charm to protect his own garden, but if he is particularly exercised and thinks his suspicions are well justified, he may set a countercharm in the field of his neighbor who he believes has harmed him. This would only be done in exceptional cases, where, for instance, the crops of one cultivator had failed when the fields about his had yielded well; for, in the main, garden magic is directed toward protective rather than toward malevolent ends. 241 789

A certain proportion of the harvest is reserved for use at home and the remainder is sold in the markets. Since these markets, which as the primary channel of distribution rank with farming in their importance in Haitian economy, they may next be considered. 433 443

000 443 [442] may next be considered. Two types of markets exist — those in the countryside where produce is often sold at wholesale, and the town markets where retail trading takes place. In Mirebalais, as elsewhere, the principal market day is Saturday, though smaller markets are held on Thursdays, and roadside gatherings of women offering small amounts of foodstuffs or cooked foods are to be found everywhere. The country markets occur at present only on Tuesdays, though in earlier times the markets shared the days of the week in rotation. To heighten the importance of the towns, however, and to encourage the peasants to work steadily in their fields by concentrating the time spent at market, it has been officially decreed that the schedule given above be followed. Before this, the rotation of the markets in the commune of Mirebalais was as follows:

MONDAY: Yabodoun; La Civelle; Landale;
TUESDAY: Mirebalais;
WEDNESDAY: Dufailly (a fairly large country market); Labouli; Colombie (a very large market);
THURSDAY: Mirebalais;
FRIDAY: Chambo and Canarde (the most important country markets in the valley);
SATURDAY: Mirebalais.

[366] The Mirebalais market is located near the central square not far from the confluence of the Artibonite and Tombe rivers, though until relatively recent times it was held in the *place* before the church. It occupies a large fenced-in space reserved for the purpose, which on the days of the great mar- 443 626 kets hums with activity. Each tradeswoman has her place there, which she retains by a kind of informal agreement, held to so well, for all its informality, that if a woman is compelled to be absent for a time, those who sit near by watch it for her and warn anyone who takes it that it must be relinquished [627] when the original occupant returns. If despite this warning

the newcomer persists in retaining the place, an informal ap- 443
peal is taken to the local magistrate, who invariably settles the 626
matter by deciding in favor of the original occupant. 627

Each woman tends to specialize in certain commodities, 443
such as meat or cloths or notions or baskets. The venders of 442
foodstuffs, other than meat, however, vary their offerings with
the season. This latter class of sellers mainly comprises women
who, living in the town, constitute a group of "middlemen,"
either buying produce at the country markets, or, going off
with their pack animals into the back country, return with
saddle-bags loaded with the purchases they have made direct
from the farmer.[8]

Country women are also well represented among the trad- 443
ers, and as they come streaming into town on market days with [482]
their head burdens, or driving the heavily laden, slow-plod- [492]
ding donkeys, they fill the streets with color and movement
that make up one of the most picturesque aspects of Mirebalais
life. A load may consist of one type of produce only, or a
woman may bring rice, maize, beans, and bananas, as well as
home-made brooms and baskets. All transactions in the mar- [436]
ket are for cash, and there is no barter of any kind, for the [437]
pattern of a money economy has been too deeply lodged in
Haitian tradition to allow any other mode of exchange. Prices 443
are based on supply and demand rather than on any agree- 435
ment between sellers, since contact with the capital causes the
current prices paid there for all kinds of produce to be gener-
ally known. Another factor which enters into price-fixing, [554]
however, is prestige. It is regarded as a mark of incompetence [558]
for a woman, whether from country or town, to return home
with unsold produce, and since the reputation of being a
clever trader is highly valued, this is avoided when at all pos-
sible, and the vender adjusts her prices as the day wears on to
insure that she will dispose of everything she has brought.

In Mirebalais, as elsewhere, the markets are best attended 443
during harvest months, when by official count as many as

443 eleven hundred and fifty sellers offer their wares in the course 443 651 of a single day. A careful tally is kept of these, since a fee for the right of entry into the market is collected from all those who sell. Local tradespeople pay ten centimes each market day, but if they are sellers of meat they must pay five centimes a day for the right of entry, in addition to an annual license fee of 11.35 gourdes. A peddler of notions who goes about from one market center to another must, on coming to Mirebalais, either present a license costing 11.35 gourdes which grants the right to do business in any market of Haiti, or pay fifty centimes for permission to sell on any given market day. Other taxes collected for the upkeep of the market are particularly concerned with the transportation and sale of livestock. A fee of 3.50 gourdes is assessed when a cow is transported from one region to another or taken to the market for sale; one gourde must be paid the local tax-collector if a live animal is sold, the seller paying the tax; while if neither party to the sale knows how to write, a notary fee of two gourdes is assessed for drawing up a certificate of ownership. A fee of 3.25 gourdes is collected when a cow or bullock is butchered to be sold; for the slaughtering of a goat or pig, fees of two and one and a half gourdes, respectively, are collected.

443 A word must be said regarding the ubiquitous "small markets" that consist of a few women gathered at crossroads or at strategic points in towns on days when there is no large market, or wherever people gather. In Mirebalais such venders sit [265] near the dispensary when it is open on Tuesdays. At cockfights and dances or at communal celebrations a small group of women is invariably found who sell drinks, bread, sweets, and other articles of food. At these "markets," too, such cooking aids as lard are sold, which both for these small markets and the larger ones is remelted and poured into little bottles selling for five centimes each. The returns from this petty trade are very small, yet in the aggregate they probably bulk at some figure that is not insignificant in the local economy.

While farming and marketing are by far the most widespread occupations, it must not be concluded that all specialization of economic function is lacking. The list of those in the *arrondissement* of Mirebalais who in 1934 paid license fees gives a comprehensive picture of the varied nature of their occupations: 463

2 justices of the peace
2 notaries
5 "pleaders" before the courts
1 doctor
6 surveyors
4 woodworkers
48 carpenters
12 sawyers
40 masons
14 tailors
3 dressmakers
4 shoemakers
2 mattress-makers
2 ironworkers who repair the caldrons for boiling sugar
15 bakers
21 butchers
23 distillers
4 millers
1 hairdresser
4 jewelers
2 general storekeepers
43 venders of notions in the market place
16 peddlers

Sex division of labor cuts across these categories. Thus the 462 baking of bread is in the hands of women, some of whom op- 463 erate ovens of considerable capacity, and women are dressmakers and laundresses. Candles are made of beeswax by old women, but the cotton that is used for the wicks, or for hammocks or fish-nets or cinches of saddles, is spun by both elderly men and women. In the main, however, the rule is that manual labor outside the house is in the hands of men, while women are the housekeepers and tradespeople. Farming has been mentioned as an occupation primarily for men. All woodworking is done by men, who make furniture and fashion the dugout canoes used on the Haitian rivers; men also do basketry and weave straw hats; leather-working is in their hands as well, and they make shoes and saddles. No pottery is

462 463 manufactured in the valley of Mirebalais, but elsewhere in Haiti men are the potters. The African knowledge of ironworking has been lost, but there are those who repair iron implements and the great pots used in making sugar, and those who work in tin. Some men specialize in making rope, others in building the mills which crush the sugar-cane. Not everyone knows how to make *clairin*, the strong drink of the peasants, and some do nothing except distill this. Painters are found who paint the larger houses built in the town, as well as those occasionally erected by the more prosperous peasants in the countryside. The calling of the mason is a well-established one. These craftsmen build the walls of the more pretentious stone houses, but more particularly find their time taken up in the erection of tombs.

565 With economic specialization goes a stratification of Haitian society, roughly drawn, but based on prestige and the command of economic resources, in which the following classes are informally recognized:[9] There are the *pauvres*, indigent folk, who for some reason have forfeited or otherwise lost their family connections and whatever they may have owned and now must actually beg to obtain enough to eat. One finds but few of these except in the larger centers; in Mirebalais they number not more than five or six. One such is an elderly man who originally came from another part of the island, lost what he owned, and when he became deaf was no longer able to earn a living. He was occasionally set at some menial task such as carrying water or gathering firewood. In another category are those known as *malheureux* — folk who are usually, though not always, incompetent, but who are generally regarded as unlucky. They may work hard on their land, but their crops fail or yield meagerly; they may obtain a *job*, but something goes wrong with it — the work is temporary, or they cannot collect the wages due them, or illness follows every period of employment.[10]

The second group comprises the middle class. This class

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contains such an overwhelming proportion of the population that no special term is applied to its members. They are comfortably situated, according to Haitian standards, living frugally on their habitations with their families where their lives follow an equitable course, and through them the body of Haitian culture flows, for they are its principal carriers. In the third class is included the *gros nègre* and the *grand nègre*. The first is a man of wealth and position, the owner of a large plantation, and frequently also a former high officer in the Haitian army or in the old Caco brigades, or a man who may have successfully stood for local or national offices. The *grand nègre* is conceived in Mirebalais to be a man of spiritual power, as represented in the more active and renowned priests of the *vodun* cult and the successful practitioners of magic. Together, the two categories may be thought of as constituting the outstandingly successful members of the community, in contrast to the first class, which includes its outstanding failures.

CHAPTER V

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, AND ADOLESCENCE

842 THE LOVE of children, and the prestige which a man gains as head of a large family, are factors that go far to explain the desire for a numerous progeny. In this not only is he aided by his own sophistication in matters of sex — for in Haitian peasant culture, one encounters no such conventionalized naïveté as the ignorance of physiological paternity found in certain other, non-African societies — but his desire is furthered as well by the absence of contraceptives, and the emphasis laid by Church, State, and African tradition on the desirability of
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[847] many offspring. Though situations do arise when, because of illicit relations between a man and woman that result in conception, an abortion is held necessary, usually as soon as a woman discovers that she has conceived, she proceeds to take the necessary protective measures. First she goes to the old women of her own family, who give her herbs for the "three baths" she must take on each of the three succeeding days.
[951] This accomplished, she next visits a priest or priestess of the *vodun* cult who has the confidence of her family or of her husband's, and procures other herbs also for the purpose of preparing baths, and, in addition, a magic charm to wear about her neck or about her waist. This charm protects both herself and the child in her womb against the evil eye or any

843 [751] other evil spirit or evil magic that may be directed against her. If she is a worshipper of the African deities of the *vodun* cult, she may also ask the *vodun* priest to determine by divination what spirit will protect the child, and what her own deity asks to insure his aid. During all her pregnancy she is particularly careful to avoid eating those foods which are "hateful" to her — that is, which cause her to become ill — though in Mirebalais, at least, it is not necessary that she refrain from partaking of the foods "hateful" to her husband. A pregnant woman has privileges and powers not shared with other [753] women, as was evidenced when a Haitian man once appeared with his eye half shut, explaining that the sty was a punishment for his refusal to buy something his pregnant spouse had coveted. "They do not always know they are sending you a sty, but it is a power they have," he made clear.

Shortly before parturition is expected, both the pregnant 843 woman and her husband invoke the aid of the family deities 782 and make them offerings of a *couvert sec.** The rite is an informal one that need not necessarily take place in the familial house of worship; if it is more convenient, it may be performed inside their own house or in the courtyard. After re- 843 peating the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria, a prayer such as 782 the following is pronounced by the woman: 539

> "*Toutes mystères, tant pour papa que manman, du même de côté mari moin: m'ap mandé ou pou' moin fait un heureuse accouchement, pou' l'ouv'i chemin ba moin.* — All the gods, both of my father and of my mother, as well as those of my husband: I ask that you cause me to have a good delivery, that you open the road for me."

At the same time the family ancestors are not overlooked:

> "*Moin mandé nou' tous pou' nou' vini délivré moin, pou' nou' l'ouvri chemin pou' moin, pou' pas quitté*

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* The various types of offerings will be discussed in the next section of this book.

843 *malin esprit barré chemin qu'en moment delivrance*
782 *moin apé' rivé. Nou' toutes Invisibles, les Saints, les*
539 *Morts, Marassa, vini assisté moin jou'-a.*— I ask you all to come deliver me, that you open the way for me, that you do not allow evil spirits to bar my path when the time of the delivery approaches. May you all, Invisible Beings, the Saints, the Dead, Twins, come to my aid on that day."

843 Should one of the couple be a devotee of Damballa or Erzilie,
782 both of them jealous gods, a chicken or two is added to
776 the customary offerings, and some gift pleasing to the god, such as a dress or suit of his sacred color, is made him. Normally
843 no further precautions need be taken. If, however, the
789 pregnant woman has had one or two miscarriages, she and her
793 husband go to a *vodun* priest, preferably a woman, and obtain a "medicine" to be used in bathing the abdominal and vaginal areas as a precaution against *mauvaises aires,* the werewolves
755 believed to consume children in the womb. If the pregnancy this time terminates successfully, some of the same
793 medicine is rubbed on the child shortly after birth and several times during the ensuing weeks, but should the infant later fall ill, the *vodun* priest brings herbs and makes a smoke-fire to drive away the werewolves that are believed still to be hovering about.

844 At the onset of labor, if either the father or the mother of
782 the unborn child is vowed to Damballa, another sacrifice is made to this god and to the spirits of twins, giving a *couvert sec* and one or two chickens and pigeons to each. If a *vodun* priest has determined what deity protects the child, a sacrifice is also given this spirit, and prayers are said to the spirits of twins, the dead of the families of both the man and the woman, and all other supernatural beings, saints of the Church and *vodun* gods alike.

844 Meanwhile the woman has been placed on the ground on

a mat or a cloth, supported in a reclining position with pillows 844
and cloths, or on a covered box standing about a foot from the
ground, with her legs drawn up. No fire is built in the house,
all doors and windows are tightly shut, and covers are provided
against a chill. A candle stands lighted at the threshold, [788]
and holy water is poured beside it; a candle is also often [782]
lighted in the church before the statue of the saint who corresponds
to the *vodun* deity under whose protection the woman
in labor is thought to be. In the room with her is the midwife
and as many as six, seven, eight, or nine older women belonging
to the families of the woman and her husband. The hands
of the woman are made to rest on her knees, but where labor
is prolonged, her arms are supported above her head to afford
relief. She is three times given very hot tea or a drink made of [757]
the stewed leaves of the mango tree and of the *bois lait*. The
midwife, with palm oil on her hands, watches the rhythm of
labor and presses on the abdomen to facilitate delivery.

If it becomes evident that this will be difficult, a *vodun* 845
priest is at once called to determine by divination whether or 793
not the deities who have been propitiated are satisfied. If the 787
answer is a negative one, he promises future sacrifices or gives 782
minor offerings immediately. Care is also taken to ascertain [775]
whether the trouble is due to the discontent of the family
dead who may have been angered by neglect to wear mourning
for them, or because sacrifices or a *service* due them have
been delayed too long. Inquiries are similarly made to determine [754]
whether the spirits of twins might not be displeased,
while the possibility that evil magic may have been invoked is
not overlooked, especially if the husband has several wives. If
the inquiry shows that the magic of a co-wife was responsible,
a strong counter-charm is made at once. Should the woman in 845
labor eventually die, however, her death is not considered to 766
be the result of any act of infidelity on her part, and does not,
as in other Negro cultures, prevent the usual burial and
mourning customs being carried out.

844 The child is delivered on a mat or cloth placed on the ground, and the navel cord is cut with scissors, leaving a length of three finger-breadths. The end of the cord is cauterized with a red-hot iron, treated with oil, and bandaged with a piece of cloth. If the infant emits no cry after birth, the midwife shakes it or strikes it smartly to start its breathing, but should this be insufficient, a large *gammelle,* or wooden bowl used to serve food at feasts, is overturned so as to cover the child, and this is beaten for a few moments, a procedure which is held both to awaken the child and to give it needed [278] warmth. After being bathed in tepid water in which calabash leaves have been steeped,[1] about a teaspoonful of muscat, [824] palm oil, and sugar is fed the infant. An abdominal band is put on in place, and the child is dressed in a nightgown tightly pinned, so as to envelop its form and cause it to grow 846 straight-limbed and firm of muscle. The process of moulding 856 the head is begun at once, pressure being applied once a day for the first three days of life. The nostrils are pinched every few moments during the first day of life and several times each of the succeeding days, to cause them to be narrow. This matter of shaping the head and compressing the nostrils is sufficiently important to have figured in the accounts of birth conventions as given by a number of persons, though there is some disagreement as to the details of the practice, some maintaining that the head is shaped every eight days for two months and the nostrils compressed many times a day for a period of eight days. The baby continues to be bathed in tepid water, and, if born during the winter months, a fire always burns in the house.

844 The placenta is buried in a special hole dug in the room where the birth occurred, the preferred places for this being beneath the bed or at the threshold. Any of the women in attendance may bury the placenta, though usually the midwife sees to its disposal. If delivery takes place during the day, it is buried immediately after ejection, but if the birth has oc-

curred during the night, they wait for daylight. Salt is added 844 [263]
to the hole, " so that the evil eye cannot take it (for magic [754]
purposes), for with salt it spoils very quickly." Neither the
hole nor its contents are held to be of future importance, and
though the child may be shown where the cord and placenta
were buried, by that time nothing will remain of it which 846
might be of use to a maker of charms. After three or four days [757]
the cord falls off and muscat powder is applied to heal the
wound cleanly. The bit of cord is saved, and if the child becomes
ill, this is boiled and the water given as a drink. Occasionally
an entire umbilical cord is dried and retained; and
one woman spoke of the cord of her mother as still being in
existence.

The mother is also bathed in water in which calabash 844
leaves and other ingredients have been steeped, and after being [824]
carefully dried, a band is tightly tied about her abdomen to
give her support. A cloth is placed to cover the vagina, which
is not cleansed until the following day, though after that the
vaginal region is washed twice daily for some forty days. Red [273]
wine is given to women immediately after delivery to sustain
them until food can be prepared. Bananas, salt fish, milk, [262]
chocolate, and a dish of stew made of chicken and rice are offered,
and in most instances the women eat heartily.

The cloths used during childbirth are carefully guarded, [754]
the woman herself or a trusted member of her family seeing to
the task of washing them, so as to prevent their being used for
evil magic. If a miscarriage occurs, the fetus is buried in a hole
dug in the floor of the woman's house while the woman herself
is bathed and otherwise cared for as in the case of a normal
delivery.

A woman is usually up and about three or four days after 846
the birth of her child, or sooner if there is no one to help her
with her household duties, in which case she may even be
obliged to perform the heavy work of going to the river for
water within the week, though she is careful not to bend down

846 or to get her feet wet. When possible, however, she waits for from fifteen to twenty days before doing this kind of work, and, in any event, she will not bathe in cold water until more than a month has passed. A week or two after giving birth she may resume her selling in the market, and two months after her child is born she will take up work in her garden.[9]

852 [851] During this period of the mother's recovery the child is ritually introduced to his world and to the spirits which govern it. Three or four days after the cord drops, the midwife, water and a candle in hand, presents the child to the sun and the four corners of the earth, speaking an invocation which none but women of this profession may know or hear spoken. The child is then carried into the courtyard before the house, though he may not be taken elsewhere for as many as three weeks. When he is taken across the threshold for the first time, he is cradled in the left arm of the one who carries him; in the left hand water is held, while the right hand holds a lighted candle. Water is thrown in three directions, outward from the door and to each side of it, as the child is taken about the outside of the house. This rite is repeated by everyone present at the time, but water is " thrown " only once.

854 789 Though it is said by some that a child is not given a charm immediately after birth unless it is ill, it is nevertheless customary to place a cord about the neck of an infant on the day it is born, to remain there until some three or four years later, when it wears out and is lost. There is no difference of opinion, however, on the point that if a baby falls ill soon after birth, steps must be taken to give it spiritual protection. A
[793] *vodun* priest is called to make a charm for it to wear, while,
[994] in addition, another charm is placed in the house to guard its inhabitants against " all bad things," such as the evil eye — since this tends to give babies convulsions — demons, werewolves, or the " little folk " who bring bad magic. A *jok*
854 754 against harm resulting from even unconscious envy is also provided, since an individual who admires a baby because of

its good health or good looks or some other attribute may unwittingly bring harm to it. For such reasons the child is often burned slightly on the cheek, a ritual carried out by the *vodun* priest in order that the scar may "give one with evil intentions toward the child an 'occupation' to divert his attention, that would otherwise be devoted to carrying out some evil design." 854 754

There is some question as to whether, as in so many Negro cultures, the child is given a special name at birth which is regarded as sacred and a thing to be concealed. In one instance it was stated that while one's "real" name was that given at the time of the Church baptism, everyone has a "nickname" (*petit nom*) that is known to the father and mother alone until the child is old enough to guard its secret character. This name is never spoken aloud, for if an enemy came to know it, he might use it for purposes of black magic against its owner. However, no agreement exists in Mirebalais as to this practice, which may represent a survival of a widespread West African custom.[8] 553 551 [754]

A child born with a caul is believed to be "strong" in combating all evil spirits. The caul is dried and reduced to powder, and the infant is given some of the powder in water two or three days after birth. If a child is born with the navel cord wrapped about his throat, he is believed by some to be destined for leadership, though others do not hold this to be a significant omen. A child born feet-foremost is regarded with distaste, so that where possible, he is turned about in the womb to facilitate a head presentation. If this cannot be done, the child when he grows up is reproached: "You came like a demon." More often, however, if a child with breech presentation is not stillborn, it is not believed that he will long survive. All such occurrences are attributed to bad magic, and the husband does not delay to seek out a diviner to discover for him what supernatural forces had caused the evil. 845 [787]

Breast-feeding begins on the third day, but if the milk does

853 Breast-feeding begins on the third day, but if the milk does
not come, the mother goes to a woman "specialist" who
[789] knows the herbs which are believed to induce the flow. When
[854] the mother is ill or tubercular, the infant is given to a wet-
nurse. Once he has begun to nurse, he is fed whenever he
cries, and as soon as he can sit up he is given the same food as
846 the mother eats. For the first two or three months after the
262 birth of her child a woman refrains from eating egg-plant,
fresh fish — although she may eat salt fish — white beans or
any others larger than Congo peas, pork, lard, and all fruit.
304 The ears of a female child are pierced when she is about a
301 month old for the gold ear-rings which are worn by girls and
women of all ages. If the parents cannot afford them at the
time, however, thread is placed in the holes until a sum sufficient to provide this important trinket has been accumulated.

856 A child is taught to sit up beginning with the end of the
854 third or fourth month, and by the time he is six or seven
months old he can sit quite well; girls are believed to be more
precocious than boys in acquiring this skill. When about ten
months old, or sooner, an older sister, a little girl, or the
father or mother takes the child by the hand and teaches him
to walk, later allowing him to hold one end of a stick for sup-
[754] port. A child is never left alone, for fear of the evil eye or of
[789] werewolves, so that a mother does not even cross the threshold
of her house without taking her baby with her, while if for
some reason she cannot avoid leaving her child while she is
in the yard, an empty bottle is placed near its pillow as a pro-
856 tective device. Teething is a matter of importance, since the
855 attitudes of the parents toward a child may be determined by
763 the first teeth to appear. If these are cut in the upper jaw, it is
said that the child's mother will survive his father, and when
this occurs, the mother takes every precaution to conceal the
fact from her husband, so he will not hate the child. Others
hold, however, that the appearance of an upper tooth first
denotes that either the father or the mother is soon to die.*

856 Instruction starts early in the life of a child. Beginning with
861

his fourth or fifth month, he is reprimanded for laziness if 856 late in sitting up, and when he is taught to walk his parents 861 call out: " Come, lazy one! Come on! " He receives no physical punishment, however, until somewhat older. Thus, for example, if after a child can crawl he is told not to go beyond the threshold, he is scolded the first two or three times he disobeys, but after this he is beaten with a small stick on the buttocks or thighs. Similar means are used to teach him at the same age not to go near the fire, to avoid the thorny cacti used to fence gardens, not to put things in his mouth, and — especially because of black magic — not to pick up anything from the ground. Training for bowel and bladder control is begun 863 shortly after birth and is continued at every opportunity the mother may have to pick up the child, so that he is usually fairly well trained when a year old, though complete control is achieved only after two years or more. A child who wets his mat is beaten, but " not too hard."

Baptism takes place when all is in readiness for the cere- 851 mony, a matter of a month or two after birth, unless the child 852 is seriously ill, in which case he is baptized immediately. The 608 fee of 2.50 gourdes to the civil officer who registers the birth [517] is paid by the father. The godfather pays a similar amount to the priest for baptizing the infant, and in adddition, if he desires and is able, he may both aid the godmother in meeting the expenses of dressing the child and give the mother a gift. The godmother furnishes the child with a shirt, a dress, a [431] bonnet — " a pretty one " — stockings, shoes, and, if she can afford it, silk for a ribbon-trimmed coverlet. These gifts are obligatory, and even where a hasty baptism of a sick child has made it impossible to provide properly for his outfitting, if he survives, his mother is given a present of money by both godparents so she can procure this finery.

As in most Catholic countries, the godparents play an im- 608 portant role in the life of their godchild. Not only do they " stand in the place of father and mother " at his baptism, but

608 remembrances are expected from them on birthdays or saints' days, while the young person, when older, often brings his problems to them, knowing that they will give him their most disinterested advice. A man may turn to his godparents for aid before asking it of his family, for they are regarded as truest of friends. Nor does he stand in awe of them as he does of his older relations. There is a free joking give-and-take between godparent and godchild, which reflects this attitude of warm affection. A person even stands in a special relationship to the children of his godparents, calling them "baptismal 608 brothers" or "baptismal sisters." 582 Among the peasants, though not among the inhabitants of the larger centers, not only marriage but even those non-Church unions otherwise socially sanctioned are frowned upon between "baptismal brothers and sisters." And Mirebalais has it that when Church marriage is contemplated by two such individuals, special authorization from the Archbishop must first be obtained.[8]

851 852 608 Saturday is the day favored for baptisms, permitting as it does the child to be brought to town on a market day. The mother rarely attends, and usually the father is also absent when the godparents bring the infant to the baptismal font, where the priest gives him his name and receives him into the Church. Later in the day the parents are visited by their friends and relatives, who, if they can afford it, bring gifts for the child and partake of the drinks and refreshments that are provided.

851 852 782 Following the Church baptism at an interval which varies with differing circumstances, the father and mother and the godfather and godmother present the child to the family deities. Arriving at the family habitation the father says:

[539] *"Mystères-o, nou' même qui te après Grand Maître protège et delivre, moin vin' remercie nou'. Et en même temps main petite la pou' ga'dé pou' moin. Pas quitté mauvaise lawoù gagné l'empi' sou' li. Ba li force, santé,*

> *et preserve li cont'e tout mal. Ba li couraille pou' moin.* 851
> *Yun jou', c'est li-même qui allé remplacé nou' pou' servi* 852
> *nou' quan' nou' pas pè la.* — O spirits, you who after the 539
> Great Master protect and deliver, I come to thank you. 782
> At the same time here is the child [you are] to protect for me. Do not let werewolves gain power over him. Grant him strength, health, and preserve him against all evil. Give him courage for me. One day he himself will replace us to serve you when we are no longer here."

Inasmuch as it is always necessary to invoke all three categories 851
of supernatural beings, a similar invocation is pronounced for 852
the dead and the spirits of twins. The rite, however, may be 782
even simpler than this. If the family house of worship is near [764]
by, and the relationship group is one which numbers important members of the *vodun* cult, the child may be taken into this house, water thrown on the ground three times, and a candle lighted. In such cases no invocation is pronounced.

Most mothers nurse their infants until they are about eighteen 862
months old, though children may be weaned when as
young as a year. Weaning is accomplished in a day or two. On [824]
the day selected, a bitter plant called *laloi* is spread on the mother's breasts, and when the child asks and is given the breast and refuses it because of the bitter taste, his favorite food is at once offered as a substitute. So efficacious is this method that one day's training is ordinarily enough. As a further precaution the child is not allowed to sleep with his mother for three or four nights after being weaned, so that he cannot take the breast at night, and is only given a place in the mother's bed after her milk has ceased to flow.

The earlier years of a child are in the main free from care, 857
and, with due allowance for the differences in individual [855]
temperaments and family traditions, he is given much his own way. Young children make "mud food" and build play-houses. When somewhat older, they organize games of

857 hide-and-seek and enjoy story-telling sessions, when the tales
of 'Ti Malice and Bouki are recounted. Still older ones make
drums out of jars and " arrange a dance." Little girls play with
dolls made for them by the older children, while boys with
sticks for horses organize themselves into " armies " with their
852 seniors as officers. When a child's teeth fall out, a minor ceremony
is performed. As each tooth is detached, the child throws
it on the roof of the mother's house, saying:

[539]

" Rat, rat, rat,	" Rat, rat, rat,
M'jet' yun bel' 'ti dent ba 'ou,	I give you a nice little tooth,
Ba'm yun vieille dent."	Give me an old tooth."

871 At this same time a beginning of formal education is made,
especially if the child lives in the town or near enough to it to
872 allow him to reach one of the schools there. These schools are
under both secular and Catholic auspices, and in them the
pupil is instructed in the rudiments of European education,
learning to read and write and to do simple problems in arithmetic.
873 If he shows proficiency and the means of his family permit,
he may go on to a secondary school at Port-au-Prince or
some other center; in the main, however, this schooling is all
he ever receives, if he is permitted this much.

861 It is not to be supposed that a child is allowed to grow up
593 without learning how to conduct himself in accordance with
602 the traditional code of Haitian behavior, for the punishment
that follows departures from this code is always both prompt
and extremely painful, beating with sticks being the mode of
correction most often employed. The mechanisms of education
and control operate the more effectively because they are
exercised by a fairly large group of persons, which includes
not only the father and mother of the child, but also his grandparents,
his uncles and aunts on both sides of the family, and
603 his older brothers, sisters, and cousins. Less restraint is exercised
593 before grandparents than other relations, for while there
604

are no customary playmate or joking relationships between 603
grandparents and grandchildren, a man would rather go to his 593
grandparents when in trouble than to his parents or uncles, 604
because of the greater indulgence they show him.

At about the age of seven or eight the children's play-life is 868
invaded by the serious work which they must increasingly assume.
According to their sex, they are instructed by father or
mother, each parent teaching the child the work he will be
most occupied with as he matures. For some children, naturally,
this education is deferred longer than for others, but, as
a rule, boys of four or five may be seen playing about the field
"helping" father by bringing him a leaf with which to light
his cigarette, or "hoeing" in company with him, while girls
are early permitted the pleasure of accompanying their mothers
to market. By observing his father at work and by helping
in small tasks the boy gradually learns how to do a man's work,
until at about the age of fifteen he himself can cultivate a garden.
Two or three years later he is given a field of his own and
seed with which to sow it. The produce from it he brings to his [454]
mother to sell for him, and she keeps what money it brings,
so that he will have his savings when he wishes to marry. Little
girls, for whom acquaintance with the techniques of selling
in the market is desirable, are given small articles to dispose
of, and the proceeds belong to them, though some mothers
demand an accounting from the young tradeswomen as a further
measure of training. A woman also teaches her daughter
to sew, to cook, and to wash and iron, instruction which is continued
until a girl, ready to be given in marriage, is able to
manage all of a woman's work.

If a family can afford the expense, children begin to be prepared 852
for their first communion at eight or ten years of age; 869
but members of poor families must wait until the money can
be found — which means that some classes of candidates include
grown men and women. At about the customary age for 869
confirmation the children are informed of the family *vodun* 794

869 [794] deities, and they are taught what must be done when a sacrifice is to be given. Parents differ widely in this as in other practices, and while some make it a point to impart this information both at this time and later in the life of the child, others refuse to answer questions, and the child must learn from what he himself observes.

864 Children in the valley of Mirebalais receive little formal sex education. Shortly before marriage young women are told enough of the mechanism of the sexual life to guard against their being frightened when their husbands come to them. As early as seven years of age, however, girls are cautioned not to permit boys to play with them sexually, while a girl who reaches puberty is carefully watched, not being permitted to go for water or firewood or on other errands unless accompanied by some child, usually younger than herself. No explanation for this is given; she is simply forbidden to leave the house alone, though eventually she learns the reasons from
864 other girls. Neither special ritual nor special instruction fol-
881 lows first menstruation; the girl merely apprises her mother of the fact. She herself has learned of the phenomenon by observing her mother and her older friends and consequently is not troubled by her initial menstrual flow, but rather is pleased that she has now become a woman.

864 This absence of formal sex education does not stand seriously in the way of the young in learning the technique of sexual intercourse. Boys of six and seven surreptitiously "experiment" with girls of their own age in the sex act, despite parental warnings. This ceases, however, as soon as the girls are nubile, for then they are under strict supervision. Young boys are often given information concerning the technique of sexual intercourse by their older brothers or friends, when these gather in groups and discuss among themselves their amorous adventures. Another manner in which the child obtains sex education is by observing the behavior of his parents. Children usually share their parents' bed until they are six or

Children usually share their parents' bed until they are six or eight years old, and the same room until they are ten or twelve. 864 513
They are counted on to sleep soundly enough, but it happens that a child sometimes awakens and, unknown to his parents, observes them. Though brothers and sisters sometimes continue to sleep together until the age of puberty, it is said that [835] attempts at intercourse between them rarely occur, for, according to Haitians, the children gradually sense that this is regarded as bad, and a boy approaching puberty who wishes to satisfy his desire for sex play goes to find a "little neighbor." Later, when the nubile girls are withdrawn from the company of the boys, the latter play with younger girls who have 864 not yet reached puberty, or carry on "affairs" with those older than themselves; indeed, it is from these latter that they obtain full knowledge of sexual procedure.

What has been said concerning the growth and training of 597 children applies mainly to those who live with their parents. No discussion of the development of the child, however, can neglect to mention the widespread institution of a form of [847] quasi-adoption, found not only in Mirebalais, but in all other parts of Haiti. By this is not meant legal adoption, though that, too, is known and at times occurs. Quasi-adoption involves children who are called "*'ti moun qui 'reté à caille 'oun*—small folk who stay at your house," or, more briefly, *'ti moun*. They are the children, often of peasants, "given" to friends who live in a town or, as is the case with some families of Mirebalais, "given" to friends or acquaintances living in the capital. To what extent this relationship offers a means for the exploitation of children in other parts of Haiti cannot be said, though tales of abuses of it, especially in Port-au-Prince, are heard. To give a person a child in this manner is in Mirebalais regarded as a token of friendship, and such children as [572] were observed, though poorly clothed, were fed not much differently from the children of the families with which they were sent to live. When the *'ti moun* grows older, he leaves and returns to his own home, though the relationship between

597 foster-father and child may continue friendly if the young person has been well treated. Such a child repays the cost of keeping him by helping in the garden and by running errands. If his parents wish him to receive uninterrupted schooling at the secular or Catholic school, they must recompense the person responsible for the child for any cost this may be to him.

86 It is in a manner such as described in this chapter, then, that the children of Mirebalais and, to a large degree, of other parts of Haiti are born and live the earlier years of their lives, completing the training which equips them for participation in their culture. The boy has learned how to farm or to carry on whatever other calling he will inherit from his father, while the girl has been prepared for marriage and the work of the household. By means of their play-life both boys and girls have learned the technique of sex behavior. In the matter of attitudes toward other members of the family and toward the ancestral spirits, as well as in their relations to the saints of the Church and the gods of the *vodun* cult, they are also prepared, having in the latter case learned to sing and dance, and, if young men, to play the drums that sound the rhythms of the *vodun* rites. It is at this point in their lives, then, that these young people as adults take their proper places in their society, establishing their own families and carrying on the tradition of their people.

CHAPTER VI

MATING AND MARRIAGE

THERE are two ways in which a Haitian family may be formed. 583
The first of these is through a marriage having the sanction of the Church, in token of which a ring is thereafter worn by the wife. The second mode of establishing a family is by means of the institution known as *plaçage*, wherein a man and a woman who desire to live together fulfill certain obligations and perform certain ceremonies at the home of the girl's parents, after which the new household is established.[1] The distinction between the two forms has been mentioned, though not analyzed, by several of those who traveled in the island after the period of slavery. Thus, according to Mac- 184
kenzie: 583
585

> "Marriage formally solemnised is not so common as unions of another kind. . . . In the North the practice of solemnising marriages is said to be more common than in the South, owing to the preceding practice under Christophe, and the exertions of the priesthood at the Cape."[2]

Similarly, St. John speaks of not noticing "any particular ceremonies" at marriages:

> ". . . some are striving to imitate the upper classes, and have the ceremony performed in church, but the mass of the people are still not regularly married."[3]

58 Though a certain prestige attaches to marriages solemnized by the Church, it does not follow that these are any the more stable, or effective in performing the functions of the family, than the *plaçage* unions. In the main, especially in the countryside, socially sanctioned matings which do not enjoy the approval of the Church endure as long and hold as respected a place in the community as those in which the woman wears the ring given her in a Church marriage.

There is an obvious difference in the ease with which the two types of marriages can be broken. Once the blessing of the Church has been given, canonical law makes divorce difficult in the extreme, while a *plaçage* mating needs only the mutual consent of the parties concerned to be dissolved. Yet a girl who is to be *placée* is given no less careful instruction before being sent to her mate than one destined for a Church wedding, while in similar fashion the parents of the *placée* make as sure that the man to whom she is given is able to provide for her and her offspring as they would were a Church wedding involved.

For both forms of mating, the customary age of betrothal for a girl is between fifteen and seventeen, and marriage follows when the parents of both the man and the girl are satisfied that the young people are prepared to take up life together. The young man, who must usually have reached the age of nineteen to twenty-one years,* must possess a house with the necessary furnishings; a field, ten or twelve goats, and a similar number of pigs, as well as a beast of burden such as a burro or a horse. Above all, however, he must properly "respect" the parents of the girl by helping them work their fields or performing other tasks, such as seeing that the men are called for a *combite* (though he would not be expected to provide the feast), or summoning those needed to do thatching.

Whether married in church or mated under the sanctions of folk-custom, the resulting union is regarded as permanent,

so that both forms must be considered by one interested in 58
social institutions as constituting true marriage. The prestige
which is derived from a Church union, however, is of appreciable
significance; sufficient, indeed, to motivate weddings
at which the children and even grandchildren of the
principals act as attendants. A man and woman may live together
as *placées* ten or fifteen years or more before they have
amassed the necessary amount to pay for a legal marriage. It 585
is only when parents of young people are prosperous enough 435
to pay for a Church marriage that their union receives the
stamp of approval of the Church, for the Church wedding
involves considerable expenditure in terms of Haitian peasant
economy. A "first class" wedding, for example, calls for
the payment of 47.50 gourdes; a "second class" ceremony,
40 gourdes; and the least expensive, or "third class" rite costs
34 to 36 gourdes, while in addition to this, five gourdes must
be paid the assistant who rings the church bells, and a fixed
fee of 25 gourdes is assessed for the civil registration of the
marriage. The wedding ring is, of course, indispensable; a
modest one, of gold, costs 60 gourdes. Food and drinks served
at the festivities following the Church service cost, conservatively,
another fifty gourdes, while if an ox is slaughtered to
provide a more elaborate feast, the amount is correspondingly
greater. Finally, the person who reads the necessary prayers
before the festivities begin and the musicians who play for
the *bal* must also be compensated. It can readily be seen, [583]
therefore, how a man and woman may live together in a
placée union for years before their resources permit a legal
marriage.

Whatever the type of mating, the first steps toward betrothal 584
are taken by the young man. Though he has courted
the girl of his choice and his proposal is acceptable to her,
customary procedure demands that she refer him to her
parents, whereupon his parents appear before those of the
girl to make their plea on his behalf. If both families reside

584 in the same district, the background of the young man is well enough known so that no investigation is necessary, though unfailingly a long and formal discussion of the suitor, his qualities, and his prospects ensues. If his home is some distance away, however, meticulous inquiries are made not only concerning the young man and his immediate family, but of
584 his ancestry as well. Should the suitor live near the home of
212 the young woman, as usually happens, his own parents come with a *lettre de demand*. In earlier days the "letter" was written on flowered paper with a lacy border, but today plain colored paper does very well. When presented, it is wrapped
[603] in a green silk handkerchief, "for hope" — the handkerchief
[822] costs about five gourdes, and a similar amount is given the scribe — and is usually carried by the oldest man of the family; that is to say, the paternal grandfather if living, or if he is dead, the father, accompanied by the mother and perhaps the other grandparents. Today it is said that in the
[178] valley of Mirebalais the custom of presenting these letters of request is often disregarded, but is by no means extinct.[7]

The family of the girl is always apprised of the exact time of the visit, and refreshments are on hand. No reply is given at the time of the delivery of the "letter," since the families of both the father and the mother of the girl must consent to the match before it can be finally approved. However, at the stage of the courtship which the presentation of a "letter" implies, this delayed answer is a matter of form, for if the proposal had not been acceptable, the girl would not have been allowed to see the suitor. The refusal of a "letter" has
[578] been known to occur, but this is regarded as a deadly insult, and deep enmity between the families follows. Should the family of the girl, not wishing to be abrupt, accept the "letter" and proffer refreshments to its bearers, but later return the same "letter" as a sign of rejection, even this would be
584 bitterly resented. Under such circumstances the young man
832
578 takes steps to obtain revenge by providing himself with a

love-charm designed to insure the young girl's coming to him. 584
He then uses all persuasion to give her a child and, this [832]
achieved, abandons her to show his contempt for the family [578]
that has formally refused to accept him as a son-in-law.

Usually, however, the visit is returned by the family of [212]
the girl, bearing a "response" of acceptance wrapped in a [822]
red silk handkerchief, "for victory." And just as the family of the young woman had known in advance of the coming of her suitor's relatives, word of the favorable verdict is now sent through indirect channels, so that the family of the young man may also be prepared to receive the emissaries who come on behalf of the girl.

With this formal acceptance of the young man's suit, the 583
wedding waits until he has accumulated the requisites for a 584
household. Custom dictates that even should he be prepared, the ceremony must be delayed for several months while he remains in a probationary state, to assure the family of his fiancée of his worthiness. The young woman is also under surveillance during this time, when she may be asked to help her future mother-in-law with the housework, and particularly with the washing and ironing of linens. Generally a period of from two to three years elapses before the bridegroom accumulates enough to fulfill his obligations in marriage. During this time the family of the young woman is acquiring the things she is expected to bring to her husband: linens and dishes — though in the poorer peasant families these items would not be provided her — cooking utensils, water-containers, knives, forks, and other things needed for the household. Her father also presents her with a horse, a donkey, six or seven pigs, the same number of goats, as well as chickens, guinea-hens, and turkeys.

Tokens of virginity are not demanded before the match, 584
since Mirebalais custom requires that the girl tell before her 836
marriage whether she has had relations with other men. She may be sent away if it is discovered that she has told an un-

584 truth, but the matter is recognized as one which concerns
836 only her husband and herself, and if he is willing to keep
836 her, it is his own affair. Consensus of opinion in Mirebalais
369 is that the percentage of girls who do not have pre-marital
sexual relations is relatively small, but the belief is expressed
that chastity is more prevalent among country women than
among those of the town, where, in turn, it is more frequent
than in larger centers such as Port-au-Prince. Even though
836 pre-marital relations are commonplace, however, the preg-
848 nancy of an unmarried girl is regarded as both reprehensible
and unfortunate, and she is severely beaten for it by her
family. In such cases, if the father of the unborn child will
take the girl, his parents are sent to bring her, but where the
parents of the man refuse to ask for the girl because they do
not approve of her, then, if he still desires her, he must him-
self face the anger of her parents. Should he not wish to come
for her, she may either remain with her family or seek work
in another community. In any event, her child will be well
cared for by her family, and no reproach will attach to it be-
cause of the circumstances of its birth.

585 Before a mating of any type is consummated, the familial
782 spirits must be notified of the approaching event so that they
776 may be well disposed toward it, for no union where this
is neglected can enjoy happiness or peace. One Mirebalais
woman was pointed out as an object lesson of the necessity of
doing this. Though a devotee of several gods, neither she nor
her husband was willing to perform the necessary rites for
[753] her gods before their marriage. She was suffering from an
[828] acute case of melancholia after the birth of her first child, and
the prevailing opinion was that she was going mad because
of the neglect of her duty toward her deities. Shortly before
a woman goes to her husband, therefore, a *couvert sec* for the
Rada deities is given both by herself and by her betrothed.
If the family of either the young man or the woman possess
deities of the powerful Pétro group, more inclusive offerings

are necessary, and the elders of the family must see to it that 585
these gods are instructed not to trouble the newly married 782
pair. If either or both of them are devotees of deities such 776
as Damballa, Erzilie, Ogun, or Aida Wedo, all of whom are known to be extremely jealous, these gods must be specially placated.

For the actual ceremony the couple appear each with a 585
candle in hand, pour water on the ground in the family house 782
of worship, and kneel and pray. The god may "come to 787
the head" of the girl or the man or some relative of each and advise them. If it asks a gift at this time, it is either given at the moment or a promise is made to fulfill the request later. If the spirit objects to the marriage, it is wooed with offerings. Thus, for example, should the young woman be possessed by the serpent-god Damballa, who, speaking through his devotee, registered an objection to the marriage, the girl would be given such gifts as a white silk dress, white silk stockings, or some other valued object in the sacred color of the god, or some perfume which might also serve to mollify him. Or should the man's deity who registered objection be
Ogun, the god of war, a fine red kerchief might be offered [822]
in honor of this god, whose color is red.*

The dead of both families are also notified by means of a 585
visit to the cemetery. The days for these pilgrimages are Mon- 769
days or Fridays, and the pilgrimages must be made during 782
either the morning or the early afternoon, since visits at night are only for evil purposes. As candles are lighted, announcement is made to the family dead of the marriage which is soon to take place, and their good offices are asked to bring it happiness.
After all the family dead have been invoked, a candle is [776]
lighted before the large cross for Baron Samedi, and another behind it for Gede, the first as the ruler of cemeteries and the graves of the dead, and the second as his handy-man. Another candle is lighted for the "abandoned souls" of the family, who have died without consecration, and yet another

585 for the victims of smallpox. If family traditions also tell of
769 those shot, not in war, but as prisoners, perhaps, a candle is
782 lighted for them outside the cemetery wall. Though the
couple may perform this ceremony together, each makes this
request of the dead of his or her own family as the candles are
lighted. This call on the dead is repeated several days after
the marriage or later, when candles are again lighted.

591 The sole exception to the performance of these rites before
583 the new household is begun occurs in those cases of *plaçage*
585 where a girl continues to live at her own home. This is rare,
769 however, for the house of a man is usually built near that of his
father, and he takes his wife there. But if special circumstances
dictate otherwise, the ceremony of notifying and pacifying
the family deities may be deferred, though a man must eventually
present every woman with whom he lives to his family
gods and in turn must be presented to the gods of the woman's
family. In similar fashion the dead of both families must be
adequately notified.

585 Marriages rarely take place in the months of November
[777] and December, the former being disliked because it is "the
[796] month of the dead," during which All Saints' Day occurs, and
the latter because it ends the year. Except for the Church
[583] wedding and less elaborate festivities to celebrate the event,
the rites which mark a *plaçage* mating do not greatly differ
from those which mark a legal marriage, which may be described
[777] in outline. The favorite day for Church marriages is
Saturday, "the day of the Virgin," and the time for the ceremony
is always early morning, before the heat of the day has
set in. If the home of the girl is some distance from Mirebalais,
the party come to town the preceding day, the girl spending
the night with some friend. Otherwise the bridegroom, accompanied
by his relatives and friends, goes to the house of
the girl early Saturday morning. Before the couple leave the
[782] home of her parents, water must be thrown on the ground in
[788] front of them, and also sprinkled by them before the en-

trance of the house — three times if there is one door (for the 585
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), three times before each door 782
if there are two entrances, and once before each door if there 788
are three. The wedding procession goes to church on foot.
The men, if they are from the countryside, are stiff, uncomfortable, and hot in their unaccustomed "best" clothing and
their often painful shoes, while the women are also selfconscious in their new dresses. The elaborateness of the cere- [202]
mony varies with the fee paid the priest, but at all events
the clanging church bell is heard notifying the town and its
environs that a marriage is being consecrated.

If the family of the bride or groom are well known in Mirebalais, a wedding reception may be given at their house for friends of the couple and of their parents, but the real festivities are held after the return to the new family home.
As the procession approaches it, the "bush-priest," a function- [793]
ary who, because of his knowledge of French, can read the
prayers of the Church, waits at the gate with two aides, small
boys or girls, each with a flag, one red and one white. He has [778]
sacred water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other,
and as he pours this water on the ground three times he intones the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Credo, and other
prayers. These concluded, hymns are sung by all the partici- [533]
pants, and singing, a procession is formed with the "bushpriest" in the lead, followed by the flag-bearers, the couple who have just been married, arm in arm, the "godfather" and "godmother" of the marriage, as the witnesses are called, the parents of the bride and groom, and other close relatives. As the procession reaches the door of the house, it pauses and water is thrown on the ground three times; the circuit of the house is made twice again, and each time, as the door is reached, water is thrown, until, the third tour completed, the participants solemnly enter.

There coffee, liqueurs, wine, *kola*, and cakes are served to 585
the principals and the more important members of the com-

585 munity. All others stay under the brush shelter which has been erected at the side of the house, where men are served the common drink of the Haitian peasant, *clairin,* raw rum. The feast, furnished by the bridegroom, includes beef, pork, and many fowls. "We do not eat badly at a wedding!" is the comment of Haitians. At the weddings of more prosperous folk there may be dancing, but no *vodun* dances are danced. "This is not a thing of *vodun,* but of the Church," is the explanation proffered.

The feasting begun, the bridal couple must submit to much speech-making. Long "lessons in morality" are pronounced by grandfathers, godfathers, and elderly male friends; in fact, anyone moved to speak expounds upon "the road to follow" for the good, the worthy life, and many a warning is given with moving examples of the fate of those who disregarded the counsel given them. The food and drinks consumed, the speech-makers silenced, and the dancers tired, the wedding guests begin to take leave, until by sundown many are gone, and soon the young couple find themselves alone.

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567 That plural marriage has existed in Haiti since the time of independence is evident from the available accounts. Little can be learned of slave matings prior to 1804, but it may be assumed that these were in the main temporary and existed at the will of the masters; and while the practice of polygyny among the slaves must have been difficult, if only because of the greater proportion of males, the African pattern seems to have had enough vitality to bring about the re-establishment of the institution as soon as slavery was abolished. Thus, writing in 1830, Makenzie notes a man "not inaptly named 'Taureau'" who "though his means were small, and his cottage still smaller . . . had a harem of no less than six wives."[*] St. John, some fifty years later, also remarks on the fact that

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> "In the interior, a well-to-do black lives openly with several women as wives, and I have seen the patriarch

sitting at the door of the central house, with huts all 175
around in which his younger wives lived, as they could 595
not be made to dwell under the same roof. . . . The French priests attempted to alter this state of things, but they did not succeed, as the wives, surrounding the intruders, asked them what was to be their position if the husband selected one among them and abandoned the rest." [10]

Elsewhere St. John speaks of the institution of *plaçage* by [583]
name, mentioning its prevalence prior to the period of his residence in Haiti.[11] Mackenzie, though not calling it by this term, tells of a rural Negro who, in the course of a long conversation during which the name of an officer of rank in the Republic came up, made the observation "with admirable naiveté and exquisite logic, 'C'est mon beau frère, parceque je vis avec sa sœur.'" [12]

Plural marriage is no less common in the valley of Mire- 184
balais than elsewhere in Haiti. Despite the insistence of the 595
Church on monogamy, many men have two "wives," a few have three or four, while one important priest of the *vodun* cult is said to have eight. The force of the sanctions behind [177]
monogamy and Church unions, however, has undoubtedly [152]
influenced the psychological "set" of the Haitian toward polygyny, as is especially to be seen in the violent manifestations of jealousy shown by co-wives toward one another. It is primarily because of this that polygynous households, such as are mentioned in earlier writings, are not found in present-day Mirebalais, and this also explains why a man with more than one spouse sees to it that where possible his "wives" live at such distance from one another that they have but little opportunity to meet. Even then, on occasion, a newly taken *placée* will pace in front of the house of her man's other spouse, flaunting the clothes and trinkets she has received from him. Or if women who share the same mate meet in the

595 OR OF WOMEN WHO SHARE THE SAME PLACE IN THE
533 market place, quarreling is invariably heard; or if one of them
sings *point*—derisive songs—against the other and goes so
far as to name the object of derision, fighting and court action
follow.

58 Though many cases of *plaçage* are the result of affairs be-
595 tween young people which result in conception, it is essential
684 in any event that the consent of the families of the man and
the woman concerned be obtained to give the mating social
validity. When the union is once entered upon, divorce
occurs only with the abandonment or mistreatment of the
woman, or her infidelity, for in these *plaçage* matches, the
moral support of her family makes a man reluctant to send
his wife away without ample justification. When a man does
divorce a *placée* wife for reasons of infidelity, she may either
go to another man or return to the home of her parents, where
she supports herself. If after a period of years she has not
established a household with another man, it often happens
that her husband takes her back. Most frequently, however,
where children have been born to a mating, a woman's in-
fidelity is punished merely by beating; and proof that a wife
is a wife whether or not she is legally "married" is offered by
the Haitian man in this fact that a *placée* is beaten for this
and less serious reasons as readily as a legal wife. Prompt
[754] action is taken against the adulterer, which, though it may on
occasion be as drastic as murder, generally takes the form of
[848] recourse to magic charms. Women who carry on illicit rela-
tionships take all care, therefore, to guard unceasingly against
the birth of offspring.

595 Many men, at least, hold that a man is often much closer
593 to a *placée* than to a legal wife, for the former is more attentive
and less demanding than the wife with her legally assured
status and permanence of tenure. Thus it comes about that
[454] *placée* spouses are frequently given generous money gifts, to
be saved for the future of their children, while as a man grows
older he may take up his residence with a *placée* wife, where

he is assured of more solicitous care from her and more deferential 595 563
treatment from her children. And though when this [457]
has occurred his "legal" wife may at his death come with a
justice of the peace to claim his body and his effects, this move
is anticipated, so that what he has given the *placée* wife and
her children is usually well out of the way. "Often they find
only the four walls of the house."

A certain number of unmarried men result from this system 838
of plural matings, some of whom remain single by preference, [826]
particularly in the cities, where the incidence of homosexuality [589]
far exceeds that found in the country. In Mirebalais [595]
itself, when the final withdrawal of the American Marines [536]
from Haiti was being celebrated, a dance called *manuba*, [527]
significantly enough the only one held indoors, was one in
which male dancers danced together in couples. The sexual 83
problem of the younger unmarried men is more often solved [626]
by means of liaisons with married women, though this has its [369]
dangers in the countryside, where the movements of every
individual are known and the least tendency to unsanctioned
social behavior is soon the subject for widespread gossip.
Prostitutes are found everywhere, and they are by no means [548]
visited by unmarried men alone. On the whole, sex "adventures" [562]
are more indulged in by men than women, even allowing
for the tendency of some women to have affairs with
youths. A belief widely held, that plural wives tend so to exhaust [595]
the virility of a man that he must seek "remedies" of a
magical nature from the priests of the *vodun* cult and from
sorcerers, must also be mentioned. Frigidity is a principal 838
cause for female homosexuality, and, because of a wife's reluctance [833]
to satisfy her husband, it not infrequently happens [586]
that she is sent back to her parents, where she may seek out
other women. The most prevalent Haitian attitude toward [626]
homosexuality in either sex, it may be remarked, is one of
derision rather than vindictiveness, as the term applied to
effeminate men, *commères*, may suggest.

595 593 671 The fact that Haitian law recognizes only monogamy introduces numerous overtones into the daily life of the people. If a church-wed wife discovers that her husband makes periodic visits to another woman, whether *placée* or not, serious quarreling between the legal wife and her husband follows. The "wife" may refuse to give food to her husband or to speak to him, and will upbraid him before their children, calling him *vagabond* — a strong word of opprobrium to the Haitian — and other terms which her facile tongue readily finds at hand. The status of the children under this dual family system is another reflection of the values it engenders. And though the account of this given in Mirebalais represents a folk-reaction rather than official procedure — for according to officials in the capital it does not exist in Haitian law — its value as a living belief which gives insight into the relevant attitudes outweighs its possible lack of validity in a legal sense.

858 In Mirebalais it is held that there are what may be spoken of as three classes of offspring. The first, which may be termed "natural" children, are those born to a man by his *placée* wife or wives before his Church marriage, or to a *placée* woman whose mating with him was later legalized by the rites of Church and State. The second class, the "legitimate" children, comprises those born to couples married in the
[848] strict legal sense of the word. Finally, a third category consists of those who may be called "illegitimate" children, and includes all the offspring of any *placée* spouse of a man taken by him after his Church marriage, or children of any of his earlier *placée* wives born subsequent to this marriage. None of these classes of children are at any special social disadvantage, and all not only inherit the African deities of their father, but must also fulfill their spiritual obligations toward him after his death by wearing mourning and performing all other required rituals.

582 671 858 851 Legally, however, the matter is different, for only the children born to a marriage recorded by the justice of the peace

belong to the father, who, in turn, is the legally recognized 582
father of all the offspring of his wife unless he divorces her — 671
something which, because of Church regulations, occurs but 858
rarely. Children born outside legal marriage have no right to 851
the name of their father. Such a one is entered under his moth- 848
er's name in the record of births, though he may and often does 858
take his father's name in school or later in life, this ultimately 551
becoming the name by which he is known and which he hands
on to his children. It is in the inheritance of the father's prop- 428
erty that children born of the various types of matings are 858
said to be most strongly differentiated, though it was particu- 848
larly with this method of distributing heritable goods re-
ported in Mirebalais that officials in the capital disagreed.
The assertion is made that while the children of a "legal"
wife inherit three quarters of the estate, and the other "nat-
ural" children receive one fourth, the "illegitimate" off-
spring have no legal right to any of the dead man's property.
They must either be provided for by their father before his
death or be aided on occasion by a natural brother who has
inherited from their common father and feels a moral obliga-
tion toward these children of their father. Children of plural 595
wives call each other by the terms "brother" and "sister," 593
and in some instances they get on fairly well together. More [601]
generally, however, their attitudes toward one another are
colored by those of their mothers, so that verbal if not physical
encounters may take place when they meet.

Where, as perhaps in the majority of cases, there is a 593
monogamous union, "legal" or "*placée*," cemented by mutual affection and mutual interest in the future of the children, life goes on calmly. Each spouse performs the tasks allotted by custom, and the children are reared in an atmosphere which varies with the fortunes and temperaments of those who make up the household. Fathers are said to prefer their daughters, and mothers their sons, among their children, but for this the Haitian has no explanation other than the phrase: "This is natural."

000 842 163 833 the phrase: "This is natural." Children are not spaced, for normally a man resumes intercourse with his wife the second or third month after childbirth. Except for the drinking of coconut milk and salt, which is believed to be effective in preventing conception if taken before intercourse, contraceptives are not known to women, which means that pregnancies 162 165 follow in rapid succession. Families are not too large, however, despite this, those numbering seven or eight children being rare, even in the hills. The reason for this is a high incidence of infant mortality, which is obvious despite the 847 absence of vital statistics. Abortions are usually resorted to by young women, who sustain the operation done by the uncertain skill of an old woman, in the fear that bearing a child will later stand in the way of a desirable legal marriage. 842 263 Some men, however, take the precaution of placing a grain of native salt on the tongue while having intercourse during an illicit affair, believing that this will be effective in preventing conception.

842 789 782 791 595 788 539 A childless woman first goes to a *vodun* priest, to have him determine by divination if a co-wife has not invoked magic against her. If her question receives an affirmative answer, she acquires a "counter-charm" to offset the effect of the other woman's magic. Should such a charm be ineffective, she would offer her prayers before the shrines of the saints and make pilgrimages to such sacred places as Saut d'Eau, there phrasing her petition to the Virgin in some manner such as the prayer overheard as a woman lighted a candle and held it in her hand before placing it on a sacred rock:

> *"Vièrge Miracles, Manman, voilà, depuis six ans depuis qui moins marié; moin apé vivre seul avec pauvre malhereux moin-a. Ça fait trois fois moin vini nan pié ou. Pas 'blié mandé moin fait ou, pour charité, moin ou petit pitite. Moin va minnin li ba ou. Moin apé parti, Manman, s' ou' pli, songé ça pitite m' mandé ou.—*

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Virgin of Miracles, Mother, I have been married for six years; I am still living alone with my poor unfortunate one. This is the third time I come to you. For charity's sake, do not forget to send me a child. I have brought this for you. Now I am about to leave [but], Mother, please think of the little one I ask of you."

CHAPTER VII

PROPERTY, WEALTH, AND THE FAMILY

596 THE WORD "family" as employed in Haiti can be understood only in terms of a broader meaning than is given it in Europe and America, where it describes only the most immediate relationship group. Though in Haiti this type of organization, consisting of mother, father, and children, lies at the base of its social structure, the Haitian "family" includes a wide range of relatives, direct and collateral, on the sides of both parents. The immediate family is thus but a part of a larger group, to which it is in many instances subordinate.

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177 It becomes apparent, from even so brief a statement, that Haitian society has not retained that exclusive emphasis on descent in the maternal or the paternal line that characterizes most of the civilizations of Africa. And while a more detailed discussion of the manner in which African and European traditions are combined in Haitian culture must be reserved for later pages, this much may at the moment be made clear: The Africans who peopled Haiti, coming from cultures where descent is counted solely on the side of the mother or the father, and coming into contact with the French, whose custom binds children with equal strength to the families of both parents, molded both traditions into the social forms found

today not only in Mirebalais, but, in their essential outlines, throughout the Republic. 611 172 178

The larger relationship grouping originates in the immediate family, and the formation of new extended families is a continuing arc. Characteristically, the process begins when a man leaves the habitation of his father and, with his wife, settles on land somewhat remote from the dwellings of either his people or those of his wife. As the sons of this couple grow up and marry, they make their homes near that of their father, so that in time a group of immediate families related in the paternal line clusters about the dwelling of this original settler, forming a habitation. The continuation of the process depends upon the amount of land available to the group; in any event, given enough time, land to permit all the male descendants of the founder to support themselves and their families will be lacking, so that the younger men will repeat the process that has been described, and themselves become the founders of new habitations whose members, with the passing of generations, will eventually be lost to the original group. While land is available, a young man is given several hectares by his father when he marries, and here he establishes his household. If the family have prospered, additional land is bought as more young men grow up, so that the relationship group may become a community of considerable size. 596 591 621 [425]

In accordance with this rule of residence, only rarely will a man settle on the property of his wife's parents, since to do so reflects unfavorably on his personal status. When this does occur, it is probably because of a serious quarrel with his own people. In such a case, if his marriage endures, he becomes a quasi-member of his wife's family, but unless he has committed some extremely grave offense, such as publicly insulting or striking a parent or grandparent, he does not forfeit membership in his own group.[1] Similarly, the fact of his having settled away from the habitation of his family does not disinherit him, for, as will be seen, this occurs in but the 591 596 [558] [578] [693] [428]

591 596 428 rarest of instances, and only by fixed legal procedure, since mere verbal denial of family rights cannot deprive a person of his inheritance.

594 432 434 454 Within the immediate family it is the duty of the man to procure food for his wife and children. When his fields have been harvested, the produce is taken to the house and given to the wife, who retains a portion of it for the needs of the household and sells the surplus at the market, using the money to buy clothing and other necessaries for her husband, her children, and herself. A part of the sum she receives may be used to purchase animals to be used for transport, food, or breeding-purposes; and whatever money is left over is saved, particularly if a desirable plot of ground is available, or a mass and ceremony for the ancestors or promised rituals for the gods are in prospect. The woman, who is held to be more thrifty than the man, is thus the banker of the family. Her opinion is prized by her husband, and though a man has the legal right to dispose of a horse or a cow or his own land as he desires, in most households nothing would be done until [593] the wife was consulted. It is true that quarrels often arise concerning family funds held by the wife, especially when a man questions the accounting given him, or on occasion when he wants money to bet on a cock-fight or for drinking or other personal needs whose cost he does not care to have reviewed. But for many men the problem is quite well solved by the expedient of deducting a sum from his earnings without telling his wife that she has not been given the full amount.

596 It is only in relatively small matters that the membership of a household acts as a self-determining unit. In affairs of greater moment the extended family must figure, for despite the informality of its organization — at least as manifested in Mirebalais — and its lack of legal sanction, its power, especially as lodged in the old folk, is none the less real. It is because of this that it is said: "The peasant consults his elders about everything he does." When a transaction of some im-

portance is being considered, particularly where the buying 596
or selling of some land is involved, all the members of a habitation
may be consulted and the opinion of the oldest man in
the family, the " family head," is almost invariably followed.
At the death of a man his widow inherits all his property for 428
the duration of her lifetime or until she remarries. Her children 596
by her dead husband, if minors, do not receive their inheritance 429
at once, but the elders of the habitation of their
father hold this property in trust for them and act as their
guardians. The deities of the *vodun* cult are believed to be 596
inherited in family lines, a tradition that gives the larger 77
family one of its most pronouncedly African traits; while the
accompanying African belief in the inheritance of the soul
within the family, despite its existence in Mirebalais principally
as a survival, is yet of importance in adding its sanction
to help maintain the inner cohesion of the group.[2]

It may be well at this point to investigate the position, 596
duties, and powers of the oldest male member of the group,
who is the head of this informal extended family.[3] His house
must be in the ancestral habitation, though he need not live
in the same dwelling as his predecessor. Just as he is consulted
on projects of a secular nature, his is the important voice in
the worship of the ancestors and the family gods. He does not
carry on the actual routine of the cult unless he is a priest, but
no ceremony would be attempted without his consent and
full instructions from him, and the call for the rite would be
made in his name.

Examples of the exercise of his power in various circumstances 596
are given. " He may threaten: 'Very well. If you will 626
not listen, I am through. Do what you like.' " In such a case
he will refuse " to extend his hand " when a member of his
family meets some difficulty, and a man thus punished forfeits
the outstanding economic advantage of belonging to
his relationship group, the right to call on the members of his
family for aid when he is in trouble. For otherwise all relatives

596 626 help one who, for example, has run afoul of the law because of attendance at a forbidden *vodun* dance and needs a certain sum to pay a fine, or who in some dispute with a neighbor has had a judgment of the court entered against him. Obviously, therefore, the family head, who holds the power of withholding family support from one in need of it, is not flouted except under great provocation.

596 584 626 Another instance of the exercise of the family head's power is given when a man or woman desires to marry or to enter into the relationship of *plaçage* with someone held undesirable by the elders of his group. Should this oldest member in particular indicate his disapproval of the proposed match, it is most unlikely that the mating would take place. The reasons of the elders may be based on situations quite unknown to their younger relative who proposed the match; the existence of old enmities between the families of the two young people would perhaps necessitate inflicting the humiliation of a refusal when the "letter" was presented. If the young people persist, the elders may say: "Do what you like, but we will not support you," and should they fail to heed this warning, trouble for them is believed inescapable, since it is held that the elders thus place a curse on the new family. Nevertheless, when difficulties do arise that the two cannot cope with alone, the mother of the one in trouble would do her utmost to help, despite family displeasure, and would use all her gifts of persuasion to soften the attitude of the family elders until she succeeded in having the ones who had defied the family edict taken back into the group. Some degree of estrangement would persist and, as has been seen, might cause a man to find it desirable to make his home with his wife's people. The elders may also take the initiative in arranging marriages, exerting pressure on a reluctant young man whose inclinations have directed him elsewhere, in favor of a young woman of desirable family. But should such a marriage not

be successful, he can count on the members of his family for financial and moral support. 596 584

These are not all the rights of the older members of the family, especially of the family head, over their juniors. 596 627 All elders may punish by beating, though the oldest member of the family exercises that right most freely and may chastise those who are themselves grown men and women. If there is gossip about a boy or a girl, the family head calls the culprit to reprimand him or, if he believes the case a serious one, to beat him. Among the peasants, particularly, grown men go down on their knees before their elders, when so ordered, for a beating. Such punishments may be particularly severe if the culprit does not soon ask pardon, for since all who are older have the right to beat a younger relative, it sometimes happens that the punishment administered by the head of the family is not considered adequate, and another takes up the stick when the family head has put it down, so that two or three wands may be broken over the back of a stubborn offender. If such a one were to fight back, he would become [626] "accursed," ceasing any longer to be considered a member of the family, and even though no legal steps might be taken to disinherit him, he would lose all caste. This right to beat is [691] accorded by custom rather than by law, but an adult beaten by one of the elders of his own family would think long before he would sue. "There is always a consultation, and a man is discouraged from going to court."

Lest the impression may have been given, in considering 596 the role of the elders and their relationship to the younger members of the family, that it is those in the father's line alone who are concerned, it must be emphasized that relatives of both parents exercise substantial control over a person. More than this, since marriage constitutes an agreement be- [581] tween families as well as between an individual man and [603] woman, it follows that both paternal and maternal grand-

596 [581] [603] parents are friendly toward each other, so that the conflict that might result from a division of authority rarely develops. Were it otherwise, it could easily happen that a person who had been ordered, or forbidden, to do something against his own wishes by the head of his paternal family would plead with the head of his mother's group and receive support to justify his disobedience. To most Haitians such a hypothetical incident was amusing to contemplate, for the elders are said always to work together. Rare is the occasion when one interferes with the decision of another, and never to the knowledge of the subject of such a decision.

596 888 626 A family elder who has no sons to care for him is well looked after by the other members of the group " until the grave." Fear as well as a moral obligation prompts this. " He might curse you," it is explained, or " He might say: 'Watch out for your own old age! You mistreated me in my old age, and you will suffer in yours.' " Such pronouncements are greatly dreaded, especially because of his control over the supernatural forces that aid or harm the family and its members.

428 The closeness of the tie between social institutions and economic life is most evident in the matter of inheritance. For though the prestige that accrues from the possession of wealth makes for strong competition through the exercise of individual initiative, yet supporting the struggle of an individual for the augmentation of his holdings are the forces of family sanction and family aid, while his very start in life is obtained primarily through the help of his relatives during their lifetime or the property he inherits from them at their death.

428 858 As has been suggested, all a man's children by a " legally " married wife inherit from him, or, if he has not espoused a wife by a Church wedding, the children of his *placée* wife or wives receive his property. Whether or not it is true that the 428 858 769 " legitimate " children inherit three quarters of the possessions of their father, the " natural " children one fourth, and

the "illegitimate" none, it would seem that the children of the legal marriage have a "social duty" to care for those of a *placée* wife who receive nothing, a moral obligation which is met because of a far stronger sanction than the fear of gossip. The belief holds that the dead will deeply resent an injustice to any of his children and will cause misfortune to befall a man who does not fulfill his duty toward those who should have shared in the property of their father. 428 858 769

Those who do inherit divide the land, flocks, herds, and all other possessions of the deceased equally, regardless of age or sex. If a man is wealthy, he may draw up a will providing for the disposal of such items of his property as under Haitian law it is not mandatory to apportion among his children. Where there is not enough land to permit each of the survivors to work an individual plot, this may be sold and the money distributed, or those who retain the land may buy an equivalent acreage elsewhere for the others, so that some of the members of the family leave the habitation to make new homes of their own in the manner already described. Similarly, though in dividing the land it is customary to allot a good parcel to the son who has worked it, if the other land is much worse and the division is disputed, an arrangement paralleling the one described may be made to allow of a fairer division. When an heir who, for instance, has taken up permanent residence in Port-au-Prince wishes to dispose of his share instead of returning to work it or of having it cultivated for him, he sells it to his brothers and sisters, or, rarely, to a stranger, for all effort is made to retain ancestral land within the family. Similarly, a part of the property of the dead may be sold to meet claims on his estate—debts or funeral costs or the expense of erecting a tomb. This would be particularly true if these expenses had been met by one of the heirs, in which case he must be compensated before the estate may be divided. Consultation with the family elders always precedes such action, however. 428 423

428 423 691 The division of the land is said almost invariably to entail lawsuits, and some litigations have been known to stretch over a period of a decade and more, for, as one resident of Mirebalais remarked, " Because of a few feet of land a peasant will, if necessary, spend a thousand gourdes at court." If a woman is the heir, her husband may intervene in a dispute to protect her interests, but if the matter goes to court, only the husband of a " married " wife has a right to appear as an interested party; the mate of a *placée* may only act as a witness. When minor grandchildren inherit, their mother, whether married or *placée*, is their legal guardian and may enter suit to protect their interests.

428 423 583 562 The rights of a woman to the property of her father may be nullified if a dowry has been given her husband at the time of her " legal " marriage, though dowries are rarely given among peasants. If she is a *placée*, or if a dowry had not passed at the time of her " marriage," the land she inherits from her parents is held by her for her children, who will in time inherit it from her, so that many parcels of land deemed by natives to belong to a single family group are found to be divided among people who bear different surnames. It is not without interest to note in passing that in contrast to the acrid disputes which characterize the settlement of a father's goods, the distribution of a mother's property is seldom disturbed by dissension.

42 In addition to land and money, which form the most important part of any estate, are the flocks, herds, and beasts of burden of the dead man, and his personal tools and implements. These are sometimes willed to brothers and sisters or favorite nephews. Land and money, however, may not be alienated, but must go to the man's own children or to such others as may have been legally adopted. A child can be deprived of participation in the estate only if formally disinherited by means of a sworn document attested before a
000 notary. As has been stated, daughters who have been given

As has been stated, daughters who have been given a dowry forfeit their share, but even when a formal *dot* has not passed, the number of animals given her when she went to her husband is mentioned and she is sometimes asked to waive a corresponding portion of her share in consideration of what she has already received. If she refuses to do this, however, there is no recourse but to allow her her full share, though public opinion would censure such greed. 428 583 626

Debts incurred by the dead must be repaid before the estate can be settled, while attempts are also made to collect all loans made by him. Where no written statement of a debt exists, a declaration by the dying man before witnesses is necessary; otherwise his heirs acknowledge their obligation at their pleasure. Conversely, if no statement attested by a notary exists to verify a loan made by him, his heirs have no means of collecting it. On the whole, lending has been found through experience to be ill-advised unless such a " paper " has been executed before a notary, and land has been pledged as collateral either before the head of the family of the borrower or before a magistrate. For though interest is not demanded by the peasants, and loans are made as a gesture of friendship, " even the people of the hills " — to use the Mirebalais idiom for the most naïve rustics — have learned that just debts are often not repaid where there is no legally enforceable claim. 428 426

A man who dies childless leaves his property to his brothers and sisters by the same father and mother. The husband of a " legally " married woman who dies childless is said to have the right to one fourth of her property, the rest going to her relatives, but most often " they drive him away," giving him nothing, and since a man is customarily too proud to contest the matter, he does not insist on receiving his due. A childless widow continues to live in her dead husband's house until her death, and she also receives one fourth of her husband's property. At her death the house passes to her husband's relatives, but the quarter of his estate which she had received goes to her family. 428 [768]

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One other aspect of the apportionment of the land of an estate remains to be considered, the matter of leaving land for the support of ancestral ceremonies. There is no general agreement in Mirebalais as to the customary practice. It was first stated that four or five *carreaux* of land, which a man himself had "held in trust," are added to the inheritance of the eldest son, to be similarly held by him. The "trustee" calls in the other members of the family to help work this land, and the proceeds from marketing its entire yield are devoted to the support of family rituals, or used for such other general purposes as aiding a member of the family who requires funds to save himself from disgrace, and the family from scandalous gossip.

The practice of alienating land to provide for the worship of the ancestors would appear to be common in the southern peninsula and in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac; and one person, not a native of Mirebalais, told how he found it impossible to buy some land he wished to acquire because it had been consecrated for this purpose. Certain men cited examples of land which had belonged to the "old, old people of the family," control of which was vested in the family head and could therefore never be divided or sold. But this is land where the family house of worship stands and where ceremonies for the family deities and ancestors are held, something not at all comparable with setting aside workable land to yield a yearly income for services of the dead. The closest resemblance to this found in Mirebalais is when a man or a woman during life sets aside a portion of land or other belongings, declaring: "When I die, dispose of this and with the proceeds care for the expenses of my funeral and discharge these obligations which I leave you." Other persons spoke of land, which having been in the family for a very long period of time may not be sold, since it had proved to be extremely good, and the "will of the ancients" is that it never be alienated. Those who men-

tioned this latter instance advanced it as a possible alternative 311
to the custom found elsewhere in Haiti, adding that it 428
was the duty of the living to honor their ancestors, and not for 769
the ancestors to make provision to honor themselves, particu- 596
larly since the dead can enforce the discharge of this duty by sending illness, bad fortune, and death to those of their descendants who are remiss.

To a very appreciable degree, what is inherited forms the 423
foundation of whatever wealth a man may accumulate during 556
his lifetime. Yet there are few, among the peasants at least, [428]
who do not seek by all means to add to their heritage, for among those folk the ambition to obtain more and more land is a dominating one. To this end the peasant skimps and saves, depriving himself even of his important needs, until at the proper time some choice parcel of ground comes on the market.

How does a man go about accumulating the funds neces- 423
sary to amass property? Ordinarily a young man is given a 434
plot of ground by his father, and the produce, as mentioned, 556
is marketed for him by his mother, who saves the proceeds for [425]
him. When he marries, his wife takes over this task, and to- [443]
gether the two strive to extract as large earnings as possible from his plot. In addition, a man may take a *job*. Such work, always paid for by the unit rather than by the day or week, is usually that of cultivating a plot of ground for its owner, and the amount agreed upon is paid when the field has been harvested. The young man at the same time can also cultivate his own fields and participate in communal labor. Another way of adding to the earnings of his fields is to help the large landowners on their cotton plantations. This work is paid for in kind with baskets of cotton, which in turn are sold to factors who come from the coast to buy both large and small quantities. A man may also increase his income by working in the cane-fields or at the caldrons when the sirup is boiled. Each

423 434 556 worker receives about ten gourdes a week, in addition to his food, and the work often is of several months' duration. To do this, however, it is necessary for him to hire another to work his own garden for the period he is thus engaged. As extra [454] money is gradually accumulated, more land is purchased, so that the returns become greater; and the process is accelerated when, upon the death of a man's father, other family land is added to what he already owns.

437 454 556 Thus the drive to obtain property is an obsession with the Haitian peasant. The question of a few centimes, to say nothing of a gourde, is hotly argued; for instance, in the bidding for unclaimed lost animals held periodically at the Mairie in Mirebalais, bids are often raised by as little as five centimes, with the bidder waiting until the last possible moment, the third call of the auctioneer, before pledging the additional sum. Those who have money prefer silver to paper and usually keep it in a trunk at home, but if troublous times impend, the money is put in jars and hidden in the ground. In this way it happens that when a man dies, much of his money is lost to his heirs, for he rarely tells even his wife or children what he has done with it.

556 Yet this point must be stressed — in the mind of the Haitian peasant, though wealth is desired for the prestige it gives, it is rarely prized for the display it permits. Frequently when a person of large means is pointed out in the market place, he will be simply if not poorly dressed. To make undue display of possessions would arouse envy, and envy brings upon a man's household the evil eye. Wealth is rather manifested in extensive farms, in elaborate ceremonies for the rituals held for family ancestors and for family gods, in the education of children to the end that they may eventually move to the capital and there attain social and political position of importance. Wealth brings prestige to its owner through the word-of-mouth comment of his neighbors, and with this he is content,

not deeming it necessary to emphasize his position through the conspicuous display of his resources. His children who get to the capital are seldom as prudent, and, as native expression has it, "It takes four generations to achieve the march from the village to the capital, and back to the ancestral village."

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PART III

HAITIAN RELIGION

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CHAPTER VIII

WHAT IS "VOODOO"?

MORE than any other single term, the word "voodoo" is called to mind whenever mention is made of Haiti. Conceived as a grim system of African practices, it has come to be identified with fantastic and cruel rites and to serve as a symbol of daring excursions into the esoteric. Not only has emphasis been placed on its frenzied rites and the cannibalism supposed on occasion to accompany them, but its dark mysteries of magic and "zombis" have been so stressed that it has become customary to think of the Haitians as living in a universe of psychological terror. 771

What, then, is "voodoo"? "Voodoo," or *vodun*, as it will be termed here, following native pronunciation, is a complex of African belief and ritual governing in large measure the
religious life of the Haitian peasantry.[1] It also has an even 184
more restricted meaning in Mirebalais, where the word often 771
simply denotes a form of sacred dance accompanied by spirit- 535
possession or merely a dance which on occasion may take its 989
place along with the *calenda*, the *martinique*, the *zeze*, and other social dances at public celebrations, where an occurrence of possession would be rare and in questionable taste. This latter meaning was recognized by St. Mery: 171 771 535

"The Calenda and the Chica are not the only dances in the colony which have come from Africa. There is an-

171 other one which has been known there for many years,
771 principally in the west, which bears the name of *Vaudoux*.
535 . . . But it is not only as a dance that the *Vaudoux*
merits consideration, for it occurs under circumstances which assign to it a place among the institutions where superstition and bizarre practices play a considerable part."[3]

171 In Dahomey, whence the term has come, *vodun*, as has already
771 been stated, signifies "god" and is a general name for
776 all deities. This source of the word has likewise long been
[192] known, as a reading of St. Mery shows:

> "According to the Arada Negroes, the real followers of *Vaudoux* in the colony . . . *Vaudoux* signifies an all-powerful and supernatural being on which depend all the events that come to pass on this globe."[4]

171 Similarly, de Vassière[5] quotes with approval a parallel definition
771 from Peytraud, while modern Haitian writers also emphasize
776 its Dahomean origin.[6] This meaning of the word had,
192 however, undergone a change in its new home even during
128 pre-Revolutionary times, for, according to St. Mery, the "all-powerful
825 and supernatural being" had come to be a nonvenomous
serpent that stood as a symbol "for all those who
184 professed this same doctrine." Today in Mirebalais even this
771 identification is a thing of the past, though the prominence
776 given serpent-worship in Haiti by most writers[7] would make
825 it reasonable to suppose that elsewhere in the island serpents
are maintained by priests of the *vodun* cult and play an important role in the rites at which the gods are worshipped. Indeed, one priest from Arcahaie encountered in Mirebalais mentioned the fact that in his own temple he kept such a snake. Yet in our valley no worship of serpents as such was encountered, and there were even those who declared that they had no hesitation in killing any snake, though these brave assertions could not be tested. Serpent-worship in Mirebalais

SERPENT-WORSHIP IN MIREBALAIS

may perhaps be said to have come to this: Adherents of the African cults refrain from killing the snake, and should they do so by accident, the African custom of giving ceremonial burial to any creature having supernatural importance is followed as an atonement. Where this is omitted, difficulties of so serious a nature are felt to threaten that to prevent them a priest of the cult is called upon to offer up a sacrifice and to beg forgiveness even after the little ceremony of burial has been performed.[7] 184 771 776 825 782 766

Inasmuch as *vodun* flourishes in Mirebalais despite the minor role of serpent-worship, it is evident that in seeking to understand its nature and its philosophy other aspects must be considered. Two historical facts must be kept constantly in mind in making this analysis, for without them, what follows would be meaningless. The first is that *vodun* derives from a background of African theology and ceremonialism. The second is that the Negroes have continuously been subjected to the influence of Catholicism during the centuries that have passed since their introduction into the island. 771 171 177

Yet another point may prove suggestive in providing a useful point of view for an analysis of the *vodun* cult. This bears upon a difficulty impossible and happily unnecessary to resolve in the field study of religion, which arises out of the degree of variation in answers to questions dealing with the same point. These answers differ not only according to the status of the individual in the cult, since layman and priest have understandably different concepts of the functions of deities based on unequal degrees of expert knowledge, but the extent to which an individual has religious interests or is indifferent to them influences the nature of his responses. A fundamental fallacy results from the fact that except where there is an officially sanctioned theology — which makes for dogma, and often for perfunctory worship, in contrast with the living dynamic nature of Haitian peasant belief and ritual — there are no "real" answers to questions in the field of religion. The 184 771

184 771 student pursuing the "correct" statement will find that no matter how painstaking his method and how extensive his precautions, the versions of different persons can never be entirely reconciled, unless a false appearance of truth is given to his findings.[8]

178 771 776 If the underlying philosophy of the universe held by the Haitian is summarized, as it can be abstracted from his expressions of belief and from his observed behavior, this philosophy might be phrased somewhat as follows: The ruler of the universe is God, its Creator, who shares this task with His son Jesus, the saints of the Church, and the Holy Ghost. Man has been endowed with a soul, and the soul, which has come from God, returns to God for judgment and, if necessary, for punishment at the end of its sojourn on earth. From Africa — *Guinée* — the Negroes brought other deities, termed variously *loa, mystères*, or *saints*,[9] and these deities have been inherited through succeeding generations by the descendants of those who brought them to Haiti. The specific function of the African spirits in the Haitian system was given in the following terms by one of their devotees: "The *loa* are occupied with men, their task is to cure. They can make a person work better than he otherwise would. When the *loa* possess people, they give helpful advice. But they cannot do the things that God does. They can protect a garden, but they cannot make a garden grow, for streams, rain, and thunder come from God." Another statement clearly shows the same concept: "God made the *loa*, but did not make them so they might do evil. [424] [425] When a man purchases a *loa* for money, that spirit will do evil as well as good, but God becomes angry and will not accept these bad spirits into the sky, and He drives them away."

776 In the ordering of his daily life, however, the forces which are foremost in the consciousness of the Haitian make up the triad expressed in the phrase "*les mystères, les morts, et les marasa* — the *loa*, the dead, and the twins." Because of their special character, an examination of the twin cult and the cult

of the dead must be deferred for a later chapter. Similarly, the 776
discussion of the final element in Haitian religion, the belief
in magic, must also be reserved for later pages, stressing here
only its separate identity from the worship of the *loa*, with
which it has been too often confused.[10]

The most striking element in the *vodun* cult is the manner 787
in which the gods possess their devotees. Despite the fact that 774
this is the aspect of Haitian religion that seems to the casual
observer its least restrained and least disciplined, possession
occurs according to well-defined rules and under specifically
defined circumstances. And since it is through an analysis of
possession that the clearest understanding can be reached of
the meaning of the *loa* to those who worship them, the manner
in which they influence the lives of their devotees and exert
their powers for good or evil, possession may be treated at
some length.[11]

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When a person is possessed for the first time, the spirit 787
which is said to animate him is known as a *loa bossal*, an "un- 776
tamed" god. The word *bossal*, which in the early days was ap- [192]
plied to newly arrived Africans,[12] has always been a term of
contumely, and today the same feeling-tone is continued
through the belief that since all things in the universe are
subject to observable regulation, and animals and plants and
human beings must all live according to these rules, the *loa*,
as members of society, may not manifest the unrestrained and
often dangerous traits of unpredictable behavior which characterize them before they have been "baptized" and thus
brought under proper control.

Baptism of a deity most often occurs when a boy or girl is possessed by a family *loa*, especially if it is one which gives that knowledge of healing and divination meant by the word *connaissance*. Sometimes, though not always, this possession is violent, and the prospective devotee rages about the house, destroying whatever comes to hand. On occasion, since custom frowns on possession at a ceremony not given by the family of

794 787 776 the one possessed, possessions of this kind mean either that the *loa* needs baptism; or that, being baptized, its devotee has been negligent in serving the god.

796 776 794 No actual rite of baptism of a *loa* — or, as it is also termed, of *lavé tête,* "washing the head" — was witnessed, but the account of the ceremony given here, obtained independently from several persons, represents an adequate exposition of the rite as performed in Mirebalais. A room is prepared where the person whose *loa* is to be baptized must remain for three days. The mat or bed on which the neophyte rests is covered with fresh sheets and pillow-cases, and three changes of clothing are made ready, one of which must be entirely new for the last day of the ceremony. These are in the color of the god [822] being "baptized"; that is, if the *loa* were revealed to be such a one as Damballa, Aida Wedo, or Gran' Erzilie, everything would be white, but if it were Gran' Siligbo, the colors would be blue and white; if Ogun, everything would be red; if Osangè, blue; where the god is one of the Pètro suite, such as 'Ti Kita or Bosu, everything would be black.*

During the three days' "retreat" the one whose *loa* is being consecrated lies alone. All day long the men and women of the family sit in the next room or outside the house, singing and praying, though at night they sleep, since "this is not a wake." [533] They not only sing the songs sacred to the *loa* being baptized, but also the canticles of the Virgin, while prayers of the Church are recited under the leadership of the *prèt' savanne,* the "bush-priest" whose ability to read the prayers makes him an essential figure in all *vodun* rites. They may from time to time have "a little procession" about the room where the novitiate lies, when small banners in the color of the god are [782] carried. Soft drinks and a *mangé sec* — a "dry" offering — are given the god, and white tapers and an oil lamp are

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* A detailed listing of the names, attributes, and powers of the more widely worshipped *loa,* the colors, days, and trees or other places sacred to them, and the "squads" into which they are conceived to be formed, will be found in an appendix at the end of this book.

lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god ex- 776
cept Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, 776 [782]
since it is said " the *loa* love desserts " — a commentary on the very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or " washing of the head," is per- [793]
formed on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest [596]
or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest.
As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, [208]
and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or
are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the [787]
time, since, it is said, " one *loa* baptizes another." Leaves of [824]
the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the
hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; [533]
then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are
sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Posses- [787]
sion occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa* to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep
through the night. A " ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may [529]
celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the *loa*, after having been baptized, is " restrained " by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[14]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no
such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest [793]
there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap-

[illegible] [773] tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control them. To have a baptized *loa,* then, merely means that the worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form. The worshipper learns how to *marré,* or "tie,"[14] his spirit, so as to enjoy the social aspects of a *vodun* dance without fear [782] that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals that are staged.[15]

789 776 794 In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted" by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wal,* or "horse." A devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another. The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *mait' tète* — and the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him. [764] It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone "taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned, all his other gods are under the control of this *mait' tète,* so that any agreement which he may enter into with this principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,[16] while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.[17] One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.[18]

789 78 794 Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of possession. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

that while some react to the supernatural with immediate and overwhelming emotion, and others, though incapable of as deep a response, do sense the mysteries of possession, there are still others who go through life without ever feeling this religious "thrill." In native explanation, it is the former to whom the gods manifest themselves, who become the *ch'wal* of their *loa;* while to the latter the deities never make themselves known. Scientifically, the phenomenon of possession in Negro cultures, at least, is as yet unsatisfactorily explained, largely because of the almost complete absence of adequate reports on the background and incidence of specific cases. Perhaps the most satisfactory approach to its understanding is through a consideration of it in terms of differences in nervous instability, which may be thought of as predisposing different persons to experience the religious thrill in different degrees; or, in other terms, by reference to their differing susceptibility to suggestion. One must reject an hypothesis which attempts to explain the *vodun* cult of Haiti in terms of the neuroses, even when, as in the admirable exposition of Dr. Dorsainvil, the approach neglects neither accepted genetic theory in stressing the inheritance of neurotic tendencies in voduist family lines, nor the important historical forces which have been operative.[10] For in terms of the patterns of Haitian religion, possession is not abnormal, but normal; it is set in its cultural mold as are all other phases of conventional living. That it gives release from psychic tension does not alter the case; neither does the fact that it offers a way to the satisfaction of unfulfilled desires, as when the god, speaking through a woman under possession, demands a necklace or bracelet which, though forever the property of the god, will be worn by his devotee. These facts merely emphasize the compensatory character of the phenomenon. The social situation of the individual also enters; some undoubtedly simulate possession for the attention it brings them, while a person who experiences no serious difficulties in the course of his life is perhaps never

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787 called upon to ask whether or not he is properly serving his 781 gods; is never placed in a situation for which possession would [114] be a release. Hence to consider all possession as something which falls within the range of psychopathology is to approach it handicapped by a fundamental misconception.

787 The best evidence of the socially normal nature of posses- 794 sion is the existence of rules governing its incidence which are well understood by all. Not everyone who is a *ch'wal* may become possessed at any dance or *service*, for the gods, if properly under control, are permitted to come only to members of the family giving the rite. At one *vodun* dance given by a priest where a number of other *hungans*, present as guests, became possessed, the host was regarded as having taken undue advantage of his visitors by bringing on their possessions. In another case Haitians from the southern peninsula who were temporarily residing in Mirebalais carefully refrained from contact with a certain *vodun* priest lest he bring on possession by their gods. At one dance for the Rada gods, the *loa* Taureau, a Pétro deity, possessed one of the drummers. Because a Pétro *loa* was neither expected nor wanted, the man was immediately removed and, when quieted, sent home. A similar situation developed at another Rada dance where Bosu " came "; the person possessed was at once taken outside the enclosure until his god had left him. If a *loa* persists in dancing at a *vodun* dance given by another family, it is either one of these *loa bossal* already described, or a *loa vagabond,* and may be scolded by the *hungan:* " You must not come here! You are not wanted! Go home where you belong! " The passion with [781] which a person resists his god when he feels possession coming on at a rite not given by his own family is particularly instructive. Men have been seen holding so tightly to the rafters of the shelter under which the dance was being held that the muscles of their forearms formed great cords, while beads of [782] perspiration rolled down their foreheads.[20] A person who must live away from his family for a long time usually takes

787 782 794 steps to " feed " his *loa* in order to satisfy it, for it is more important to give offerings to the spirits than to dance for them. He therefore either quietly prepares a sacrifice of cereals and liquor in his own room or sends money home so that his *loa* may be " fed " at the family habitation, and his absence explained to it.[21]

794 776 178 [192] [103] [184] When *vodun* deities are discussed in Mirebalais, most often two " companies " of them are mentioned, the Rada and the Pétro " squads." In one list of gods that was obtained, the word *Rada*, derived from the name of the ancient principality of Allada in Dahomey, called forth the explanation " *qui veut dire Dahomey* — which is to say, Dahomey," though it should be made clear that neither the words *Rada* nor *Dahomey* are any longer recognized in Haiti as place-names, being today simply qualifying designations of *loa*. There are regional differences in the number and ranking of other categories of gods that hold no important place in Mirebalais. The existence of these other categories is, of course, well known, and one person referred to " the seventeen and twenty-one classes of *loa*," of which, however, only the following were named: Rada, Pétro, Dahomey, Guinée, Congo, Nago, Ibo, and Wangol. Of these the Congo and the Ibo gods are well known, though their worship is chiefly restricted to individual families, while the Nago and Dahomey categories, though significant from the point of view of indicating African origins, are most commonly grouped under the term *Rada*. Guinée also occasionally figures in worship as carried on in individual families, but this term is more often understood as a general designation for all *loa* outside the Rada, Nago, Congo, and Ibo groupings and for certain Pétro gods. Wangol derives from the geographical entity Angola.

776 794 From comparatively early times the impression has been given that certain of these classes of gods perform only good, and others evil. Nothing could be further from the truth than this attempt to read European concept into Haitian ideology,

776 for though some gods are feared far more than others, and
794 some generally regarded with affection, even these latter bring great harm to a neglectful devotee, while the gods whose power validates the most malignant magic may, in certain situations, work for the good of their worshippers. Especially has there been great confusion in discussions of the so-called
[114] Dom Pédro worship. Whether or not the origin of the term as given by St. Mery is correct — that it derives from the name of its founder, a Spanish Negro from Petit-Goâve[22] — the statements that have been made concerning it are in the main
[782] misleading.[23] Thus, it is not true that the Pétro gods are unqualifiedly evil and the Rada deities unqualifiedly good; nor that blood sacrifices are made exclusively at Pétro ceremonies, while the services for other gods are innocent of such sacrificial
776 offerings. The impression gathered in Mirebalais concerning
794 the Pétro gods is that they are principally, though not exclu-
769 sively, derived from the process of deification of powerful ancestors, which in Africa exists in forms that clearly explain the essential tradition that offers a basis for this custom as found in Haiti. This is reinforced by statements to the effect that most of the Pétro "squad" are Créole or native gods as
793 against the Guinée deities in the other groupings. One mem-
794 ber of the *vodun* cult, indeed, made the concept of deifying
776 the powerful dead explicit, saying that Pétro was a great and
769 evil *vodun* priest who had died with the *loa* not "taken from
[775] his head." For while a general principle in the cult of the dead is that in the normal course of events those who die deliver up their souls to God, making the care for these souls primarily a concern of the Church, it is recognized that there are others such as this Dom Pedro who become *loa*. This oc-
[764] curs when an individual, usually a priest or priestess of the *vodun* cult, who during his lifetime was known to possess great supernatural power, dies without having had his *loa*
[775] "withdrawn from his head." Burdened by these spirits, and therefore unable to get to God, his soul goes to the bottom of

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a stream, there to remain until, becoming impatient, it demands to be taken out. A ceremony then brings back the tortured soul and makes of it a "*loa nan canarie* — a *loa* in a jar" — which thereafter acts as a guard for its family. 794 776 769 775

There is little agreement as to the place of residence of the *loa*. In general, it is believed that they come from Guinée each time they are called, returning when they have, in the native idiom, "descended from the heads of their horses" — that is, when the possession of their devotees has ceased. Those "under the water," however, being Haitians, remain in Haiti for seven years until the ceremony just mentioned, of putting them *nan canarie*, has been performed, when they, like the other *loa*, return to Guinée. At the same time, all recognize the African character of the *loa*, whether they be gods brought from Africa or the Créole *loa* from Haiti itself. 794 776 787

Worship of the *loa* is directed by priests of the cult. The terms *papaloi* and *mamaloi* as designations for male and female priests, almost universally employed by non-Haitian writers, are practically unknown in Mirebalais, where, as in most regions of Haiti, a priest is called a *hungan*, a priestess a *mambu*.[24] Besides the *hungan* (or *mambu*), and the *gangan*, a term applied to a *hungan* of renown, is the *bocor*, a practitioner of magic, not a member of any *vodun* priesthood, but a man who has acquired his power by the purchase of spirits. He is particularly differentiated from the *hungan* and *mambu* by the fact that the *loa* of their own accord are believed to have given "*connaissance*" — the knowledge of healing and helping, to these latter.[25] Not all gods can endow their devotees with this *connaissance*. Some of the Rada deities, in addition to those of the Ogun group who give it, are Legba, Damballa, Aizan, Bosu, St. Jean, and Agwe Woyo; among the Pétro gods it is conferred by Bosu Trois Cornes, Simbi d'leau, Gede, Ossange, Mait' Gran' Bois, and Mait' Calfou (Carrefour). Simbi en Deux Eaux and Simbi Proméné both give magic power, the former conferring knowledge of excellent protectives against 793 776 184 791 755 793 776 (791)

793 werewolves as well as of the ingredients to concoct healing 776 baths. Certain priests worship and control a large number of 755 deities, as is shown by those which comprise the personal pantheon of a *gangan* from the valley of Mirebalais: Gedenibo, Erzilie Gé Rouge; 'Ti Kita Demembré; Simbi en Deux Eaux; Bumba Trois Îlé; Legba; St. Jacques; Ogun Ferraille, Ogun Balandjo, Ogun Ashade; Lemba; Aizan Keleké, Aizan Wedo, Aida Wedo, Damballa Wedo; Baron Samedi, Bosu Trois Cornes; Congo Wangol, Maît' Mapou; Agasu; Agwe, Agweto Woyo; Kadia Bosu; Sobo Gran'; l'Afrique Guinée. Whatever his ability, the *hungan* can cure only diseases "sent by man" — that is, those caused by magic — and by the *loa*, since against illness sent by God he can do nothing. Gossip [521] disapprovingly whispers how in more than one instance a *hungan* took advantage of his position and the trust of his clients, falsely to represent himself as able to cure an illness "sent by God" through stating it was due to magic.

793 An important function of the *hungan* or *mambu* is to fore- 787 tell the future, and it is as a diviner that the *vodun* priest or priestess is most often employed. No major rite would be considered by a family unless divination were resorted to, but consultation is made for a far wider range of affairs than those of a purely religious nature, and no proposed undertaking of any importance in the secular field is begun without visiting a diviner to discover whether or not the fates are propitious. When divining, the priest is usually under possession by his gods, but other methods, such as gazing into a crystal or basin of water, may also be employed. Several divining séances were visited, but no description of them need be given here, since a number of accounts, including an especially full one by Parsons, are available.[26]

793 Though a certain hierarchy seems to exist among the *vodun* 184 priests in other districts of Haiti, in Mirebalais the organiza- [755] tion of the cult is informal to an extreme degree.[27] In the [789] minds of the cult members, various priests in the same region

are differentiated according to the types of healing in which 793
they have had the greatest success, and the " miracles " to their 755
credit, such as a *hungan* who had achieved a wide reputation 789
for being able to resuscitate dead children. One *hungan* of the valley is spoken of as having powers which rank him with the greatest in the land, but now that he is old, a nephew of his is being called upon to act in his place. In a relatively short time, say his friendly clients, he will take his place even among great *hungans* elsewhere. 784

Under the *hungan* and *mambu* are assistants called *hunsi*, 794
or sometimes, in the case of men, termed *adjanikon*. In some 184
parts of Haiti, particularly in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac and 789
the southern peninsula, there are degrees of initiation for the *hunsi*, which include the ordeal by fire that makes them *hunsi kanzo*.[23] In Mirebalais, however, the *kanzo* rite, though known by name, is neither required nor performed. The *hunsi* and *adjanikon* know the rituals in a general way, hold and wave the banners used to salute the gods, sing the songs for the *loa*, aid in bringing the possessed dancers out of their possessions, and perform such other ritual tasks as helping the officiating *hungan*. Some members of the cult group have special ability to sing large numbers of the ritual songs for any *loa* which may be called, while others perform the animal sacrifices. It is among these male assistants that the most expert drummers are found.

This, then, constitutes an outline of that system of belief 771
included under the term *vodun*. Once more, in summary, it may be emphasized that *vodun* is neither the practice of black magic, nor the unorganized pathological hysteria it is so often represented to be. The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship.

CHAPTER IX

VODUN WORSHIP: THE SERVICE

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THE *loa* make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect.[1] Fortunately, the wants of many of the gods are modest, and they are satisfied if a candle is occasionally lighted, some water " thrown away " in the place of worship, and they are kept informed of family happenings. But when the *loa* finally clamor for a sacrifice, the time when it is to be made is deferred until the necessary preparations can be completed, for the attitude of the Haitians toward the gods in such matters, as one explained it, is that "*Mystère c'est 'ti moun, faut les derigé* — The *loa* are like children, and must be told what to do," and " If the *loa* are promised a sacrifice, they must accept the date set by the one who serves them." But when that date arrives, the ceremony must be held or the *loa* will cause their worshippers much trouble. This does not mean that a poor person, or one who has met with reverses, may not plead with his god and count on being permitted to defer the offering if he is unable to provide what is asked.

Simple annual rites are held for the gods in January, each 78
family giving small offerings in its house of worship to its own 776
deities. These minor ceremonies are not to be confused with
the extended rituals which a family may perform but once in
a decade or a generation. Because of the extensive preparation
and large outlay these entail, such rites are often postponed
from year to year. According to some, this postponement is
sought through an *action de grâce,* based on Church ritual,
while others maintain that it is but necessary on his special
day to appeal to the deity who is troubling the family, give
a small offering — a *mangé sec* — and ask for the desired respite.
This may be done several times, until crop failures, sudden [793]
deaths, and the loss of valuable property begin to afflict the [787]
family, whereupon the family head seeks out a *hungan,* who
by divination determines the supernatural forces that are responsible
for these misfortunes; and when his statement that
the gods have reached the end of their patience is confirmed
independently by several other priests who are consulted, active
preparations for the major rite are finally set in motion.

Any such important ceremony must be held on the ancestral 346
habitation, and centers in the *maison de servitude,* the family 778
house of service for the gods. The house itself, to be differentiated 794
from the *humfort,* or "temple" of the *vodun* priest, 78
may be elaborate or simple in accordance with the status of
family members in the *vodun* cult.[3] At one end of the sacred
house is a platform about two and one half feet high on which [776]
are placed calabash plates for the *loa,* six for the Créole
deities, three for the Mystères Guinée, and a white plate with
a "thunder stone," or Neolithic celt, and a necklace for Damballa.
Not all *cailles mystères* are painted, but some, it is said, [353]
are green "for hope," and some red "for victory," while one [532]
was said to have designs of flowers and snakes painted on the
wall above the platform.[4] These houses usually have two rectangular
rooms, each with a separate entrance and each having
its platform at the narrow end facing the doorway. One of [776]

346 the rooms is consecrated to the *loa*, the other to the spirits of
778 twins and the family dead. If the house is a large one with
776 three rooms, the third will be for the Congo *loa*. It was also
774 said that occasionally such places of worship reserve one room
[illegible] for the Rada deities, a second for the Pétro *loa*, and the third for the Congo gods, the dead and twins being worshipped elsewhere. For the Ibo gods, however, it is agreed in Mirebalais that there is never a separate room. But whether the gods are worshipped in a single-room thatched shelter or a more impressive "temple" with a metal roof, none of the major categories of supernatural powers are neglected.

776 In the main, large ceremonies are concerned with the task
78 of restraining, or less often of pacifying, deities that have been
796 molesting a family, and of making content those who have
794 been demonstrating their goodwill toward the group. Such rites must be sharply differentiated from the ordinary *vodun* dance which, coming after the family ritual, forms but a part of this complex, and serves to express joy at the dangers averted and gratitude for the good that the friendly *loa* are to bring. At the ceremony drums may or may not be employed; at *vodun* dances they are indispensable. Possession is induced at the ceremony by the *hungan's* invocations; at the dance by the rhythm of the drums. The ceremony is attended only by members of the family and those who are specially invited; invitations to the *vodun* dance are broadcast over the countryside, and all take part in the social phases of the evening. For the ceremony, sacrifices not alone of cereals and drinks but also of the blood of animals are provided; at the *vodun* dance only minor offerings are given. And while both types of ritual are a part of a single functioning religious system, it is at the first where the most important end is achieved, that of obtaining protection from hostile gods and gaining the favor of those who are friendly.

78 The pattern of the ceremony — called a *service loa* — is
79 sufficiently definite to allow a generalized version to be given,

based on the rituals that were observed. In every case at least 78
two major officiants are necessary, the *prêt' savanne* and the 79
hungan, though the role of the latter is the all-important one.
Last-minute preparations are made during the final morning,
but what is needed will have been accumulated over a period
of many months. Tables to hold offerings—sometimes two, 78
sometimes more—are arranged at the sacred places on the 79
family habitation, usually near streams or great trees where 778
the gods reside. Eggs, cereals, drinks, and cornmeal—the [776]
food of the gods—are brought, and the animals to be sacrificed
are tethered near by. Early in the afternoon the family, [532]
dressed in white, assemble, while the *vodun* priest with cornmeal
describes on the ground the cabalistic designs called
verver, and he sees to it that all has its proper place on the
altar, whether it be the ever-present crucifix, or the chromolithographs
of the saints, or the bottles of "drink"—usually
non-alcoholic—or cereals and flour of various kinds. Consecrated
water must be on hand, particularly at the big "altar,"
as the table covered by a canopy to protect the sacred objects
is called.

The first part of the ceremony is an *action de grâce,* which 78
in Mirebalais requires an hour or more, but which is said to 79
last two or three hours in southern Haiti. This ritual, entirely 776
derived from the litany of the Church, must always precede [177]
any *vodun* ceremony of the kind being considered here. Its
purpose is said "to set the *loa* in movement" and to notify
them of the rites that are to come, but psychologically it also
serves to assure the participants that they are not proceeding
to the worship of African gods without having paid friendly
homage to God, the ruler of the universe, and the saints. The [533]
songs and prayers are brought to a close by an *adoration,* when
offerings of money are made by members of the family to pay
the officiant. At this point the songs change to a more African
rhythm, and the *vodun* priest takes active charge.

As darkness falls, on the first day of the rite, he summons the

78 *loa* troubling the family, or, if it is the second, those which
79 have helped them, to tell whether or not they are willing to re-
776 ceive the sacrificial animals. The omen which indicates their
acceptability to the gods is their nibbling at leaves or pecking
at grains of corn and other cereals offered them, after which
the gods themselves come, possessing their servitors. At mid-
night or later, as the violence of the possession recedes, the sac-
[184] rifices are offered. In Mirebalais, at least, the hysteria said to
mark the moment "when the blood flows" is not present. The
actual killing of the animals, witnessed in numerous instances,
is one of the more routine aspects of the ritual.[4]

After the animals have been killed, a long period of quiet ensues while the work of dressing and cooking them takes place, the ceremony beginning anew when this is done. If evil deities are to be banished or "restrained," they are called once more, and the priest may have to battle with those possessed by them, for these gods have no desire to be driven away, or incarcerated where they cannot escape. Most of the food given such gods is placed in large pots and buried in the earth with them, but, with characteristic human perversity, if the sacrifices have been for good *loa*, these are only allowed to have small portions. The ceremony closes with the coming of day.[5]

78 This pattern varies in details, and to the Haitian these dif-
791 ferences are important. This is shown by the response of a per-
794 son in whose company two similar rites were observed, to the
776 question whether the second would resemble the first. The an-
184 swer was decisive. "No, the ceremony will not be the same. In
the first one the most important spirit lived in a mango tree;
in the second, it is in a bamboo." The Pétro gods receive black
or gray-colored animal offerings, the Rada deities white, red,
78 and vari-colored ones. Only Bosu Trois Cornes, Pelicon, and
796 Pelib are given bullocks, the first because he, like this animal,
794 is horned; the second because he is even more dangerous than
776 Bosu; and Pelib because as a water-god he will otherwise take

cattle and all other animals when the river floods. Rituals involving 78 776
these larger sacrifices, however, are held only on the 774
rarest of occasions, and are thus much less common than 776
the ceremony which, typical of those witnessed, may now be described.

This *service* was held in a habitation southwest of Mirebalais, 78
across the Tombe River in the foothills of the mountains. 79
It was said to be the first ceremony of its kind given by 753
this family, and would not have to be repeated for a generation 776
or more. The immediate cause was the occurrence of numerous illnesses and deaths. When members independently consulted their *hungans* to discover the reason for these misfortunes, they were informed that the family *loa* demanded such a rite. Finally one priest, more powerful than the others, became possessed and described in great detail the type of ceremony that was desired: of how many days' duration, the number and kind of sacrifices, what gods were to be called, which troublesome ones must be "sent away" or "restrained," and those of the friendly *loa* who were to be fed.

The entire ritual was conducted out of doors, and at about 78
half past four in the afternoon of Thursday, 5 July, 1934, when 79
first seen, the *action de grâce* had already begun. It was being 776
chanted by the *prêt' savanne*, a bespectacled, middle-aged 778
man, who read from an old prayerbook, while the *hungan* sat quietly by. The officiant was standing in a cleared space with his back toward a grove of trees, facing the "altar." Opposite was a grassy slope, which was separated from this grove by a brook where the Mait' Source lives who watches over the habitation of the family. A white banner hung high in one of the trees a little behind the altar.

This altar, called the *trône*, was a table covered with a white cloth, spread over a frame to form a canopy sheltering its sides and back. A black cloth was beneath the white covering. Under the table a wooden bowl — a *gamelle* — contained water in which sacred leaves had been steeped; near it was a

778 779 772 778 calabash filled with bananas, millet, rice, beans, egg-plant, and squash. On the table, under the canopy, were a crucifix and holy water, lighted white candles, a lamp of palm oil in a drinking-glass with a floating wick, food—rice cooked in milk, a stew of rice and beans, cooked chicken—and sweetened drinks—*kola*, and orange drinks among the rest, together with small drinking-glasses containing coffee. In addition, roasted and grilled corn, pineapples, fig-bananas, cassava, and sirup could be seen. Fastened to the inside of the canopy were *images*, chromolithographs depicting the saints, there being represented, among others, the Mater Dolorosa (for Ezilie, in honor of those long dead), Our Mother of Perpetual Aid, St. James and St. Anthony. Some thirty feet away, under a palm tree, was another table, for Simbi, without a canopy, on which also stood various cooked and uncooked foods. Still farther away was the "first" table, the most important in the ceremony, for Bosu. It likewise held food and drink; while near it was a large fire, the all-important *boucan* for Legba. The sacrifices, tethered to trees not far from the *trône*, consisted of animals and fowls: one very large black boar, two smaller black pigs, and a black goat, a black turkey, a guinea-hen, two white pigeons, and several chickens, including a black one with ruffled feathers and a number of varicolored ones.

778 779 776 During the Catholic-like ritual the singing, led by the *prêt' savanne*, was desultory. The members of the family, some twenty-five persons, were gathered directly in front of the *trône*. From time to time the leader, holding a lighted candle in his hand, would pour water into a small depression that had been dug directly in front of the altar. All knelt for the prayers, the Pater Noster, the Credo, the Ave Maria, and for 778 794 the long *adoration* and benediction. Throughout this *action de grâce* and much of the rest of the ceremony, two women *hunsi* in white, members of the family, waved red and white banners before the *trône* or later before the table where rit-

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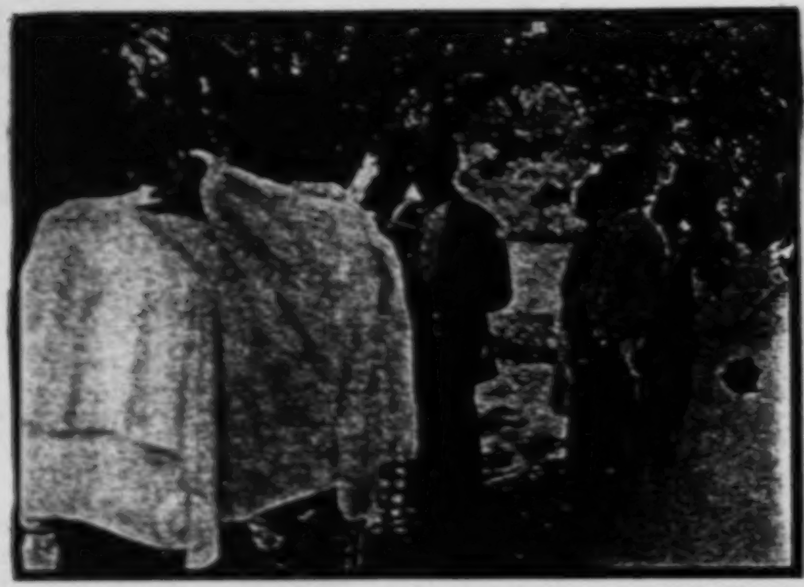

ABOVE, *An action de grâce preceding a vodun service, when prayers of the Church are read by the prêt' savanne.*

BELOW, *As the vodun priest takes over, he twirls a member of the family to bring on possession.*

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[facing p. 160]

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ABOVE, *The possessed woman offering a candle and pouring sanctified water before the altar.*

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BELOW, *The* vodun *priest exhorting the possessed woman.*

[facing P.161]

uals were being performed. If they failed to wave their banners 78
vigorously or often enough, the one in charge chided 79
them for their lack of zeal, whereupon their movements would
become a kind of dance. During the *adoration* each member
of the family was called upon to give coins or candles, the first
for the *prêt' savanne,* though this was not his entire fee.

With the benediction, the *action de grâce* came to an end, 78
and the solemn, tired voice of the *prêt' savanne* was heard intoning 79
a hymn, which, in the usual fashion, was repeated by 533
the assembled group until, without interlude, without even
a pause, the interpolations of the chorus gradually changed, so
that the rhythm became African, and, with the transition, the
vodun priest took over the leadership. The *hungan* began by
repeating several times the phrase which throughout the entire
ceremony was to punctuate all its climaxes, "*Grâce* [*et*]
misé'corde," and the family murmured it in response. He then 78
ordered each member of the family to address himself to the 79
loa, telling what troubles had befallen him and what favors he 776
desired. An assistant now took six candles from the *trône.*
Proceeding in a counter-clockwise direction, he described a
large circle about that part of the meadow where the ceremony
was to take place, fixing a candle in the ground at intervals.
Four of these were for the four corners of the earth, one
was for Maît' 'Bitation — the deity termed Master of the Habitation
— and one for the Maît' Source — the Master of the
Stream. When the members of the family, each holding a
lighted candle, had formed in a line, they were bidden to
place these candles in the earth within the area described by
the six already there, and as they scattered over the sacred
ground, little flickering flames dotted the hillside and the
grassy meadow behind the *trône* in the deepening dusk.

Then all returned to the altar, and the *hungan,* taking the 78
first of three plates made ready for him, began to describe 783
verser. One plate held white cornmeal flour, one was filled 796
with gray ashes, called Guinea flour, and the third contained 532

78 a black powder of ground, roasted coffee beans. Starting at the
793 tree near the "first" table for Bosu, he traced a white line
796 that, passing the second table and the trees for Simbi, con-
532 tinued to the *trône,* to which subsidiary motifs were then added in gray and black, making of the designs an intricate geometric composition.

78 With bell in hand and a small whistle in his mouth, both of
79 which later were entrusted to his assistants, the *hungan* went about, blowing the whistle at intervals to call the *loa*. Singing,
[533] he directed that a wooden boat-shaped basin containing water be placed in front and a little to the left of the *trône* for washing the feet of the sacrificial animals. Though all the family were present, they were again ritually summoned in song to come with the sacrifices and were ordered to stand near by with lighted candles while the animals were bathed. As they gathered, the *hungan* became possessed by Simbi, who took it upon himself to set the fee for conducting this ceremony at 117.10 gourdes. When he announced this sum, loud pleas of poverty were heard from the family, while speaking through the priest, the god bargained with them until the sum of 110 gourdes was finally agreed upon.

[533] The *hungan* now sang a long invocation, inviting the gods of all those places where Africans live to come. First the feet of the fowl were washed, then those of the pigs, and finally of the goat. Each fowl was passed over the body and head of every
[822] member of the family as it was presented with the requisite song to the proper *loa* — the red and black cock for Legba, the black fowl for Gede, the red one for Ogun, the white for Damballa, and the fowl with ruffled plumage for Congo Zandor. Then each was placed on the ground in front of three small piles of food taken from the *trône*. They were watched with anxiety by all present, for the pecking at the food is a signal that the god accepts the animal given him. The small pigs for 'Ti Kita Demembré, and the boar for Bosu, were offered the same food as the fowls; the goat for Erzilie Gé Rouge was pre-

sented with the leaves on a branch of the sacred tree. All the 78
animals ate, a favorable omen. 79

This ceremony was held during the rainy season, but the usual afternoon rains had held off. At this time, however — about eight o'clock — threatening clouds came up and soon the tropical downpour began. The heavy rain continued for more than an hour and the subsequent drizzle did not end until almost midnight, but this was not permitted to interfere with the proceedings. Now the participants took places before the "first" table, for Bosu, again with their offerings. Inasmuch as Bosu was the deity who had shown the greatest ill will toward the family, those present awaited the decision with heightened tenseness as the goat, frightened by the many people gathered about, hesitated long before he nibbled at the leaves held out to him by the *hungan*. But eventually all the animals ate, meeting this paramount test, and as each partook of the food the *hungan* several times called out "*Grâce mise'corde,*" the family echoing their response with emotion. Now two men who had strong Bosu gods knelt before the table, and the fowls were again and again touched to their heads and passed over their bodies in gestures that described the sign of the cross, in order to induce their gods to come to them.

As the singing became louder and more rhythmical, various [533]
members of the family became possessed. The deities who responded to the calls were, in the order of their appearance, [776]
Kita, Erzilie, Simbi, Bosu, Damballa, and finally Gede (Papa Gedenibo). The possessions took their characteristic African form, with some of the possessed running about, jumping into the fire for Legba, and stamping on the embers with their bare feet, others reeling with arms waving, still others rolling on the ground, which, as the rain continued, soon became very muddy. Most of those under possession were women, but [776]
about nine-thirty one man became possessed by Simbi, and later another by Gede. As the *loa* "came" in ever greater

78 number, exclamations of pleasure were heard that the gods
79 were responding. Outwardly, the ritual seemed completely
776 disorganized, the "*loa*" and the spectators moving, mud-bespattered, tense, from the table for Bosu to that for Simbi, and back, or to the *trône*.

533 The singing went on without interruption to the accom-
539 paniment of the bell and occasional blasts of the whistle.
78 Among the songs heard during this period of possession were:
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[534]

Bosu li join' qui chose a tè,	Bosu found something on the ground,
Pas remassé li.	Do not pick it up.
Bosu ma'ché,	Bosu goes about.
Li join qui chose a tè',	He found something on the ground,
Pas remassé li.	Do not pick it up.
Un va entrave	You will come to harm
Si ou ramassé li.	If you pick it up.
Va enragé Bosu.	You will anger Bosu.
Simbi en Deux Eaux,	Simbi en Deux Eaux
M'we fé p'ou,	I do for you,
F'e p'moin,	Do for me,
Fi-a, Congo,	Help, O Congo,
Congo Zandor.	Congo Zandor.
Simbi Kita Kita, travaille pour nous,	Simbi Kita Kita, work for us,
Jodi-a pour nous,	Today for us,
Demain pou' zott'.	Tomorrow for others.
Erzilie, o Lemba,	Erzilie, o Lemba,
M'ap' mandé coté Erzilie ye.	I ask, where is Erzilie.
Mangé a'paré.	The food is ready.
Gedenibo, derrière la croix, Gede,	Gedenibo, behind the cross, Gede.

Devant Baron, Gede,	Before Baron, Gede. 533 539
Derrière la croix, Gede,	Behind the cross, Gede. 78
Jodi-a m'p' nan sang m'we,	Today I am troubled, 79
Gedevi, rhele Gede, ça Gede,	Gedevi, call Gede, this Gede,
Jodi-a m'pas nan sang moin.	Today I am troubled.
Balai, rousé, cerclé, quitté.	Cease to sweep, sprinkle, hoe.
Moin pas nan sang, Baron Samedi.	I am troubled, Baron Samedi.

Shortly after eleven o'clock the *hungan* intervened to calm 78
those possessed, for the time was at hand to give the sacrifices. 79
Summoning the family to assemble again before the *trône* with the offerings, he commenced a long ritual in which each creature was prepared by being carefully washed and combed, while the boar for Bosu was also fastidiously perfumed and powdered. At the direction of the *hungan*, the fowls were first offered, the killing taking place at a distance of some thirty or forty feet behind the *trône*. The chickens were held with the two wings and the head in the left hand, so that the neck was exposed. The knife was passed twice over the neck to describe a cross, after which each fowl was cleanly and skillfully dispatched. One of the assistants of the *hungan* held a small calabash in which some of the blood of each animal was caught, and another, knife in hand, sang with him that they were offering this *koklo* to the deity for whom it was intended. As the last of the chickens was being killed, the *hungan* left the *trône* and quietly strangled the pigeons for Damballa.

All possessions had ceased, except that of a man "mounted"
by Gede and a woman by Simbi. The man particularly at- [776]
tracted much attention, for Gede is known as a gossip, and so [521]
diverting were his revelations of family scandal that all were too absorbed listening to him to show any interest in the sacrifice of the animals.

78 79 533 fice of the animals. At one point the *adjanikon* holding the calabash in which the blood was caught threw it on the ground in anger, declaring that animals should not be killed for people who were too indifferent to come and sing the songs that accompany the giving of offerings. Some of those present thereupon detached themselves and came to watch the killing of the two small pigs, as the song, repeated over and over, changed to:

[539]

O minmin, moin couteau la,	Oh, here, here is my knife,
Soso na pé tué, soso,	A pig is to be killed, a pig,
Jodi-a.	Today.

78 79 At this point several other men joined in handling the larger animals, for now the one killing the sacrifices could only hold the mouth of each beast before he cut its throat. And when the boar was to be sacrificed, even more assistance was needed, and a line of rope had to be fastened about his snout before he could be handled at all. The killing was ended when the [533] sacrificial goat was slaughtered, to the accompaniment of the [539] song:

Ma'ze Louisa,	Miss Louisa,
M'ap' tué ou jodi-a,	I kill you today,
Pour Erzilie, 'Ti Kita,	For Erzilie, 'Ti Kita,
Gé Rouge, Pié Sèche.	Gé Rouge, Pié Sèche.

The calabash containing the blood was now placed on the *trône*, while the carcasses were gathered in an orderly pile in front of it. The *hungan* described a circle about the massed bodies with cornmeal, also making two white lines in the form [145] of a cross over them. He then began to sing the *adoration* that follows every killing, while the family and all others present threw coins for him into the dish that rested on the bodies, only a few sous of which he gave to his assistants. This rite ended as the women came to him one by one, each to take a

chicken for cleaning and cooking; the larger animals were 78
given to the men, who carried them some distance behind the 79
trône to dress them. For a time Gede continued to possess the young man, who went about talking nasally, demanding gifts and distributing rum, but all others sat quietly about, talking as they worked.

After the food was cooked, preparations were made for the 78
concluding part of the night's ceremony, when the *loa* who 79
had been troubling the family were to be *renvoyé* (sent away) 776
or *borné* (restrained). Those thus "sent away" and buried were Erzilie Gé Rouge, Bosu Trois Cornes, 'Ti Kita Demembré, and 'Ti Jean Pié Sèche, while Lemba and Simbi djo (Simbi nan d'leau) were "restrained." The head, feet, intestines, heart, liver, kidneys, and some meat of each beast and fowl having been separately prepared, they were placed in proper receptacles, large jars or baskets, each of which also contained a number of needles with broken eyes, and thread. This was to give these undesirable spirits an *occupation*. For the *loa*, when buried, is told that before it may again come to harass the family it must thread the needles, and since it can never insert the thread in an eyeless needle, it can never reappear.

Preparations over, the troublesome *loa* were called to the table for Simbi, and as each entered the head of a devotee, the possessed one fought with the *hungan*, for the *loa*, not wishing to be restrained, offered stubborn resistance. "If the *hungan* had not been masterful, much evil could have happened at this time, because he had to fight three strong *loa*." When they had at last been subdued, the *hungan*, bearing a large wooden cross, walked to a place outside the habitation, where first he made *verver* and then caused a hole to be dug, in which he placed the baskets of food. As he did this he formally announced that this food was for the family's *loa* for whom there was no further need; that having given this food, the family had no further obligation toward them; and they must there-

78 79 77 [778] fore never return to trouble the living. As witness to this, he was now putting the cross in place, " which causes everything that is evil to flee," to remain until it rotted away.

Simbi djo was " restrained " where the *trône* had been; Lemba under the mango tree near the place of the table for Bosu. Some of the meat of the pigs was buried in these places with all other kinds of cooked food, and the gods were told that they were to repose there for from seven to seventeen years, after which they would again be fed. A cross of iron was buried with the cooked meat, and as each jar, both now and earlier, was put in place, this song was sung: [778] [538] [539]

Poussé allé,	Get you gone,
Poussé allé,	Get you gone,
Icit pas peys ou.	This is not your country.
Ça lan Guinée,	It is Guinée,
Qui pays ou.	That is your country.

78 A violent rain-storm not only made it impossible to reach the place of the ceremony the following day, but also made it necessary for the family to defer all but a few of the more essential rites. The second day's ritual was thereupon put over to Saturday, when according to original intentions the *vodun* dance that had been planned to close this complex of ceremonies was to have occurred, but which in consequence was postponed until some weeks later.

78 79 The ritual of the second day of this *cérémonie* began much earlier than that of the first, for by about one-thirty in the afternoon the *action de grâce* was almost completed. As one approached, a newly dug mound of earth with a cross over it where the troublesome deities had been buried was to be seen just outside the land belonging to the family. The cross was draped with a black cloth, and was itself painted blue and white, while a rosary and a magic *garde* of native twine were suspended from it.

On this afternoon the ritual was performed in two places, a

spot somewhat farther down the stream than the site of the 78
earlier ceremony, and later at the family habitation on the 79
hill. There was one table arranged as a *trône* and under its [778]
canopy, beside the *images*, the candles, and the crucifix, were white foods such as rice and white beans. Instead of Pétro *loa*, [776]
this time the ceremony was to bring Rada gods who were to be asked for children, good health, and good fortune. The *trône* was just below the confluence of two brooks, near some great palm trees. Near by was a weir, while in the larger stream, below the point of juncture, were two small natural pools.

When the *action de grâce*, which did not differ from that [532]
witnessed earlier, was ended, the *hungan* again made his *verver*, and these were yet richer in design than on the previous occasion. As he finished he took a number of the women of the family by the right hand, spinning each in turn several times to induce possession. The *loa* Damballa Siligwe "came" [776]
almost at once, possessing a woman who threw herself into the stream, threshing about as a "serpent." No one troubled himself to attend to her, however, as she emerged and walked about in her wet clothes behind the *trône* and in front of it, so that, according to the *hungan*, the *loa* became angry and would not come, thus making it necessary to sing many more songs of praise and entreaty. As he sang, the *hungan* seized [533]
one member of the family after another by the hand, spinning [539]
them about and making them kneel before the *trône* to bring the *loa*.

Moin dit Gran',	I say, Gran',
Bonjou', Gran',	Good-day, Gran',
Bonjou', bonjou'.	Good-day, good-day.
Enfants, la yo, Gran',	It is their children, Gran',
Qui àp mandé coumen nous ye-e,	Who ask how you are,
Enfants yo	Their children
Qui ap dit bonjou'.	Who say good-day.

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Damballa Wedo,	Damballa Wedo,
Papa, nan pié boi',	Papa, in the tree,
Moin pa' pe' monté.	I cannot climb.
Papa ou c'é' coulev',	Papa, you are a serpent,
Papa ou c'é' Dagowe.	Papa, you are Dagowe.
Damballa Siligwe, Anvalou,	Damballa Siligwe, Anvalou,
Nous salué ou.	We salute you.
Ça nous dit,	What do you say,
Alada Sisigwe?	Alada Sisigwe?
Papa Damballa moin,	Papa Damballa mine,
Signalé nous,	Show us,
Signalé nous Dahomey.	Show us Dahomey.
Nous acé! Nous acé!	We are here! We are here!
Papa Ogun qui met' pié	Papa Ogun who enters
Nan humfort.	The *humfort*
Ago, ago-e!	*Ago, ago-e!*
Kadia Bosu,	Kadia Bosu,
Nous acé,	We are here,
Kadia Bosu.	Kadia Bosu.

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These songs failed to bring the gods, and the mother of the girl who had been possessed was sternly commanded to take her up the hill to the house and dress her in clean dry clothes. Before she could return, another young woman who, it was later learned, was a member of the family from the region of Grand Bois, some distance away, came running down the hill possessed by Damballa. Crying out for more room, she ordered those sitting near the *trône* to move on as she roughly pulled others toward her. Now the *loa* came rapidly, with six or seven immediate possessions; and even one reluctant girl who stood by nervously, hesitating to soil the fresh white dress trimmed in blue which she, like the other women of the family, was wearing, was soon "mounted" by her *loa*.

Once again the *hungan* made *verver* and, as he did so, the woman possessed by Damballa, leaping across the brook, climbed into a calabash tree, holding to the near-by palm fronds for support as she shook the tree to punctuate her shouted directions and demands. As she climbed higher and higher, the *hungan* pleaded: "Go no further, Papa. Climb no further," but to no avail. By this time it was after four o'clock, and since this day the rains did not delay, the *hungan* entreated her to descend from the tree, to permit him and the others assembled there to go up the hill out of the downpour. Wooing the "*loa*" with song, he urged: 78 79 [533] [534]

Verver ci mè' a tè,	Here is *verver* on the ground,
Pinga cé'émonie moin,	Take heed of my ceremony,
Shango, ago-e!	Shango, *ago-e!*

While he sang, he made *verver* about the base of the tree on which the woman was standing and along the bank of the stream. But he still had no success, for she persisted with much violence to recount the wrong that had been done by the family to provoke the anger of the gods — how one member had bargained with a *hungan* to induce him to send evil *loa* to the other members of the family, that they might die and his inheritance might be the greater. Before she would consent to descend, all the sacrifices had to be brought for her inspection, and all those possessed were required to go up the hill and dress in clean clothes. Returning in the rain, the freshly dressed women gathered about the base of the tree, exhibiting the sacrificial animals to the *loa*, the chickens held high in the hands of their donors, and the goats and sheep prominently placed. Slowly, very slowly, as the downpour continued, the woman began to descend, and many times she hesitated, so that it was more than ten minutes before she reached the ground. [532]

But even after she was on the ground and the *hungan* was

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preparing to seek shelter from the rain, new possessions continued, until, saying: "The *loa* are greater than I am," he went on with the ceremony, singing:

[533]
[539]

Ossange Damballa Wedo,	Ossange Damballa Wedo,
Laissé coulé, Ossange-o!	Permit coiling, Ossange!
Ai-bobo!	*Ai-bobo!*
Moin entré,	I enter,
M'ap salué loa.	I salute the *loa.*
Ogun, Ogun Achade,	Ogun, Ogun Ashade,
O, Ogun Achade,	O, Ogun Ashade,
Hier soir Ogun fai' yun rêvé'-o	Last night Ogun dreamed a dream-o
Rêve' li tourné lègèdè.	Dreamed he turned a spy.

A woman became possessed by Damballa, as did the young man who had "had" Gede the preceding night of the ceremony; the woman was in a gay mood, going about smiling and laughing, while the man threw himself in the water and rolled like a snake. And since the *loa* were coming so strongly, the *hungan* began the ceremony of washing and presenting the sacrificial animals, which this time included two white male goats, one very large and one smaller, a white sheep, and six or seven fowls of various colors. The presentation made, the entire group marched singing up the path to the houses, the flag-bearers saluting with their banners the woman so happy in her possession.

[346] As the procession came up the hill, it passed a newly built small house, intended to serve as the family place of worship for the *loa* now introduced into the habitation, and a framework of brush, or *tonnelle*, that had been erected as a shelter under which the postponed *vodun* dance was to have taken place. Without pausing, they proceeded slowly to the gate-

way, where a ceremony was held for Legba, the guardian of entrances, that he might permit the other *loa* to pass. 78 79

At the direction of the *hungan*, the bars of the gateway were let down as prayers, the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria, were said. Then he sang: [539] [533]

Papa Legba,	Papa Legba,
Fé ou gagné patience	Have patience
Pou' ou service.	At your *service.*
Ago, ago-e!	*Ago, ago-e!*
Papa Legba,	Papa Legba,
Sorti lan Guinée,	Come from Guinea,
Pou' nou' passé.	That we may pass.

As this song and others of similar tenor were sung, the man who had been first possessed by Gede, and earlier in the afternoon by Damballa, strode shouting along the path beside the entrance, into the near-by fire, which was made the hotter as several men blew on it and poured rum into the flames; he stamped in it until he was seized and calmed. The *hungan* once more began to make *verver*, this time at the gateway, as he sang: [533] [539]

Papa Legba,	Papa Legba,
Na pé mandé,	We ask you,
Ça wé la?	What do you see there?
Adoré-é-o	We worship, oh,
A-i bobo!	*A-i bobo!*
Papa Legba,	Papa Legba,
Ouvri barrière pou' nou', ago-ye!	Open the gateway for us, *ago-ye!*
Ouvri chemin pou' moin.	Open the path for me.

As he sang, he passed the red and black cock for Legba over the body of the possessed man sitting in a chair, who thereupon resumed his excited movements, reeling along the path 78 79 533 539

78 79 [533] [539]

and from time to time again tramping in the fire, as these songs were heard:

Legba cuiscuignon,	Legba who limps along,
À la longtemps,	It is a long time
Moin pas wé 'ou.	I have not seen you.
Papa Legba, wé!	Papa Legba, look!
L'ouvri barrière pou' nous passé.	Open the gateway that we may pass.
E-ago-ye!	*E-ago-ye!*
Legba chita lan barrière	Legba who sits on the gate
Ba nou' passé.	Give us the right to pass.
Ago-ye-e!	*Ago-ye-e!*

The chicken was also passed over other members of the family, but without bringing on any new possessions, and was several times presented on both sides of the entrance-way, wings outstretched, the *hungan* occasionally half-kneeling. Finally stepping inside the entrance, he wrung the neck of the animal, which was destined later to be roasted and to hang for several days over the gateway. While the *loa* Legba was dancing in the fire, Gran' Erzilie " came to the head " of a woman who, after violent possession and a great deal of pacing back and forth in company with "Legba," went down on her knees. Still another woman became possessed, by Damballa, and rolled in the mud. Another procession, for the return to the *tonnelle*, was formed as a lilting song was sung, with everyone dancing to it. "Legba," walking backwards, led the way, calling out: "This way, Papa, come this way." The one possessed by Gran' Erzilie followed on her knees, while, some distance behind, "Damballa" rolled from side to side as she moved her body face-downward along the path. After a few moments the woman on her knees began to beat the ground rhythmically as she proceeded, and as "Damballa" caught up with her, she beat this rhythm on the thighs and buttocks of the other. Arrived at the *tonnelle*, both were finally induced to come to their feet, to be immediately sent away and freshly dressed. 78 79

[346] Inside the family shrine, on the ground at the right hand as one entered, were the articles of food and drink that usually constitute a "dry" offering, or *mangé sec*—rolls, cassava, cakes, grilled maize, coffee grounds, sirup, and bowls of corn-meal called *accansan*, with water. The *hungan* made more *verver* just inside this door to honor the gods that were to be worshipped here, as the "ceremony of the sheep," a sacrifice for the Rada *loa* named St. John the Baptist, was begun. A table was placed under the *tonnelle*, and a container of water in which the animal was first washed. He was then made to stand on the table, where a fresh white table-cloth had been spread, while he was combed, powdered, and perfumed. A piece of white cotton cloth was tied about the horns of the animal, and a lighted white candle was held in place on the right horn or at times between the horns by an attendant. While a song honoring Damballa Wedo was sung, the *hungan* went into the small house to care for the two women, who were still in a state of possession. He set them dancing inside and after a few minutes they were led forth by "Legba," each to pour water and to light a candle before the sheep. The two goats were next washed and "dressed," white cloths and soft beeswax candles also being twisted about their horns. Other offerings under the *tonnelle* were a white pigeon for Damballa and a red cock for Ogun.

Each member of the family now took the fowl or animal that was his offering, as all were summoned inside the shrine, where final directions were given regarding the disposal of the sacrifices, and invocations were spoken to the gods. After this they came out, placing the animals before the men who were waiting to see to the killing, which was carried out in a manner even more matter-of-fact than on the first night of the ceremony. By this time it was about half past six o'clock, and

78 79 night had fallen. As before, the men addressed themselves to the task of butchering the animals, the women to that of preparing and cooking the fowls.

It was perhaps five o'clock in the morning before all the food was made ready to serve. The *hungan*, who had been taking a well-deserved rest, was called, and prepared a plate for each *loa*. After giving every member of the family a dish, he arranged them in two rows before the small house of worship, himself heading the group, attended by two *hunsi* with white and red candles and sacred water. First reciting the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Credo, he announced to the Rada *loa* that their food was ready and that they were invited to come and partake of it. As he said this, each person entered the house as directed, to place the plate he carried on the table, where a cloth, knives, forks, spoons, and condiments already had been arranged. Many members of the family became possessed, an excellent omen that the Rada *loa* were eagerly coming to partake of the offerings. The head of the goat was placed on the floor, the roasted cock was hung above the gate leading to the habitation. Then the door of the house of worship was closed that the *loa* might eat undisturbed, and for several hours people sat quietly by. Finally the *hungan* knocked at the door to announce his entrance and asked if the *loa* had finished. He then called the family to come and eat what the gods had left, and by ten o'clock that morning, everything was consumed.

CHAPTER X

VODUN WORSHIP: THE DANCE

THE *vodun* dance, the most public aspect of Haitian peasant ritual, has been more frequently observed and reported on than any other rites of the cult. The worship of the *loa* by an individual, the baptism of his *loa*, and the minor periodic sacrifices he makes to it that it may protect him are entirely private in nature, while presence at the *service* for the *loa* is essentially restricted to members of the family. The *vodun* dance, however, is viewed quite differently, for news of it is widely spread by word of mouth, so that, in contrast to the private character of all other rituals, *vodun* dances are important social occasions, and their success is measured by the numbers in attendance and the enthusiasm of the participants which makes a dance *chaud'*—"hot."] 796 [178] [203]

The *vodun* dance may be said to function in several ways. Above all, it is an integral part of the worship of the *loa*, and as such is marked by repeated possessions which indicate the presence of the gods. Yet it also offers an important opportunity for recreation, as is indicated by the fact that in Mirebalais the term *bamboche*, which means a dance at which one merely enjoys oneself, is often applied to it. By no means do all who go to a dance become possessed, for of one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons present, no more than twenty or twenty-five will come under the power of their gods. The old 796 787 cont

796 535 men and women exchange gossip and sit about, joining in the songs or merely observing the proceedings; while the young people form part of the singing, dancing circle that revolves almost without pause about the central post of the *tonnelle*, the shelter where the festivities are held.

796 To speak of discipline in connection with these dances is to evoke new and astonishing images for readers familiar with the more popular literature on Haiti. It is admittedly true that as one first witnesses a *vodun* dance, one's reaction is that this is a performance governed solely by the dictates of individual [416] possession. These ceremonies are usually held at night, deep in [291] the bush, lighted only by a small, smoking oil lamp and by the [411] candles fastened to the pegs of the drums, while the participants dress in anything but their best clothing, and in their belts the men carry the machetes always worn by the Haitian [533] peasant. Add to this the effect of the unceasing rhythms of the drumming, the blanket of sound from the unison singing of the participants, the violence of the possessions, and it is not strange that the untrained observer tends to assess what he sees in almost any terms but those of the underlying discipline [154] that defines all activity in the worship of the gods. A release of psychic tension is undoubtedly afforded those who become possessed, and this is also experienced to a lesser degree by all 796 those in attendance. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized, de- 786 spite so much that has been written to the contrary, that this form of worship of the *loa* is neither unrestrained hysteria nor drunken orgiastic satisfaction of the sex drive. The behavior of the participants, in terms of the accepted patterns of European and American religious decorum, often seems uncouth, vigorous, violent, and even dangerous, when it is merely the expression of a different tradition. And as for the orgiastic aspects of these rites, Haitians have ample opportunity to satisfy their sexual impulses elsewhere, without making this a basic and constant element in the worship of their gods.

796 *Vodun* dances, in Mirebalais as elsewhere, take place on

Saturday nights. This is not because of the especially sacred 796
character of the day, but rather because the Haitian govern- [656]
ment, in order to assure a continuous working week, refuses
permits for other days. The occasions for the dances are varied,
as is evident from those given during the course of this field-
work. One of these was that of a *hungan* as a compliment to
visitors "who knew Dahomey" and was conducted as a serious
rite in the worship of the *loa*. Two dances marked the end of
services for family gods, and were variously interpreted as
tributes to the family dead and the twins, who must not be
neglected in any religious observance, and as celebrations
offered in praise of the gods who were to protect the families,
giving the dances, to mark the "restraining" of the evil spirits
responsible for their troubles. Two other dances celebrated
the "baptism" and initial use of new sets of drums. As has 796
been pointed out, there are also non-religious occasions on 529
which *vodun* dances are given. On days of secular celebrations,
such as the anniversary of the declaration of Haitian independ-
ence, or the withdrawal of the Marines, the *vodun* dancing is
purely social, though the ritual drums are used, the sacred
songs are sung, and the steps of the dances are those seen at any
Saturday-night gathering. Added to the fact that no posses- [787]
sions or other manifestations of serious worship of the *loa* oc-
cur, the "secular" *vodun* dances differ from the others in that
they are held away from any family shrine, taking place within
towns or cities, something never permitted in their non-social,
religious counterparts.

The *vodun* dance — and in the remainder of this chapter 796
only the dance which has significance in the worship of the *loa* 346
will be considered — is patterned like all other ceremonies of
the cult.[1] It is held at a family habitation, under an open brush
shelter known as a *tonnelle*, constructed for the occasion next
to the family *maison de servitude*. If the habitation at which [787]
the dance is given is not the one where this house of worship
is found, the shelter is built near a hut so that those possessed
will have a place to retire.

796 346 will have a place to retire. The *tonnelle,* which is merely a flat brush roof supported by a number of upright posts, must be built strongly enough to withstand the assaults of those possessed, who not only lean heavily on the supports, but sometimes climb through the brush roof to lie for a time on the cross-beams which form the base for this flimsy covering. Its ostensible aim is to protect the participants from what is known as the *neige,* or "snow," as the heavy dew is called, but, as might be expected, the structure has a ceremonial as well as a utilitarian purpose. Of particular importance is the central post, called the *porto cabesse,* or the *porto mita,* because the gods are believed to wait there until their drum rhythms sound, when they use this to descend into the *tonnelle.* The fire which burns during the whole period of the dance near the entrance to the habitation is also characteristic and indispensable. It is for Legba, who, as guardian of the entranceway must first be worshipped, in order that he may permit the other deities to come.

796 The dances may begin shortly after sundown, but are not fully under way until two or three hours later, and last all night. In no case was a dance witnessed which began while there was daylight, though during the dry months, January and February, when there is no work to be done in the fields, dances open at a somewhat earlier hour. The rectangular dancing-space under the *tonnelle* is lined with spectators, who are seated on such chairs and boxes as the family giving the dance can provide or such others as have been brought by their owners, though, in the main, people stand. The vigor of the dance varies as the night progresses. It is usually slow in starting, people drifting in later as they finish their evening meal, while the best drummers are rarely present at the outset. [993] Unless the dance follows an earlier ceremony, such as the baptism of drums, or a *humfort,* the *hungan* in charge also does not appear until a late hour and even when there has been an earlier rite, such a personage may well go to his home to rest before returning for the night's effort.

before returning for the night's effort. By midnight the dance 796
is in full swing. Though individuals here and there may absent themselves for a time, the attendance remains relatively constant, until as the crowing of cocks marks the approaching dawn, the number of dancers begins to dwindle rapidly, and with full daylight few remain other than members of the family. Only rarely does a *vodun* dance last well into the morning; what one sees after sunrise are the poorer drummers beating their mediocre rhythms for the young people who continue a desultory circling about the central pole. This does not mean that the *vodun* deities shun the daylight. It is merely because the participants must hurry away to get into their Sunday clothes for early mass in the village church.

The obligations of the family giving a dance are clearly established by tradition. Most important is the *tonnelle,* which they must build, and the drums and their accessory gong and rattles, which they must furnish. The drummers are not paid, but are given much attention when the refreshments that must be provided are distributed. These usually take the form of *clairin,* though coffee and bread may also be offered the guests early in the morning. The *clairin,* or raw rum, is passed [273]
from time to time, but not in sufficient quantity to cause inebriation. Those who supplement this with a generous supply of their own, and show the effect of it, are regarded with anything but approval.[8] Other accessories for the dance which must be at hand are the banners used to salute the deities, and the candles and water needed to bring those possessed out of the more violent stages of their seizures. If anything else is [265]
required or the guests desire further refreshments, these may [943]
always be bought from the women who set up their little stands at every dance.

Drums, iron, and rattles are indispensable for a *vodun* 796
dance. The drums, of the characteristic hollow-log African 534
type, tuned with pegs inserted in the sides and reinforced with twine wound about the stretched heads of cow-hide or goat-

796 skin, are played in batteries of three, the largest being called
534 *manman,*[3] the middle the *seconde,* and the smallest the *bula.*[4]
533 To be used in dances, the drums, like the *loa* of the worship-
[178] pers, must be " baptized," as will be seen when an account of their making and consecration is given in a later chapter. The iron, or *ogan,* usually consists of the blade of a hoe struck by a large spike, and the rattle, *açon,* in the form most often encountered, is a rounded calabash, containing seeds or pebbles. The iron and the rattles set the basic, steady beat about which the complex drum rhythms play. The smallest drum first takes the time after the iron and the rattles have begun, the notes being played with an accessory figure by means of two thin sticks. The medium-sized drum is next heard, while the *manman,* ritually the most important of the three, comes in last. The *seconde* also has two sticks, one short, thick, and straight, the other a small bow, which gives an added resilience to the notes of the drums' subsidiary rhythms. In playing the great drum, the single crooked stick, called a *baguette,* is held in the right hand, while the left strikes the drumhead with heel or fingers according to the quality of tone desired. The drumstick itself is wielded either against the skin head or against its wooden side, thus permitting a further variation in tone.
796 When " salutes " to the gods are called for by the drums, it is
776 the voice of the *manman* that signals the sweeping circular
533 movements of the dancers, dictating with its beat the dips and semi-prostrations of this figure in the ritual dancing, called *asagwe.* The drum rhythms are always distinctive for each type of *loa,* and every devotee knows the rhythms which call his god.

796 The drums and iron are the focus of all activity of the dance,
534 especially since those who are possessed dance facing the
[187] drums, in whose beat is heard the voice of the gods. Hence the spectators cluster most closely about them, for anything of significance which happens must happen here. The players of the rattles — it is but rarely that more than one rattle is not

employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instru- 796
ments are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi,* who join the 534
massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center [794]
pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely
enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of
the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is 796
held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady 533
notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of
the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come
until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is
usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process
which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to
begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding
singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues
to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and
chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most
West African and New World Negro religious music.

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has 796
"arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of 787
the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the
ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about
the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic be-
havior attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, [793]
whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan,* taking a calabash of water [794]
in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite
him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in re-
verse; if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns
counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to
the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary
of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed
person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come
to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently
to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands.
Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the cen- [782]
tral pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross [788]
with the candle before it.

796 787 with the candle before it. He next does the same before the *ogan*, then before each of the drums in order, continuing to dance before the drums, usually with great violence, while the few "social" dancers who still may be circling about the center pole make way so that he may execute his steps. Gradually his dancing becomes calmed, until he is taken either to the *maison de servitude* or to a near-by house, where he rests and if, as often happens, he has rolled on muddy ground during his possession, washes and changes his clothes.

796 794 787 159 Several examples of the force of this tradition of being "mounted" by the *loa* may be given. One of these which is of especial interest concerns the possession of a man of good education, in the early thirties, who throughout his childhood and early manhood had had no association with the *vodun* cult, but had been encouraged by his family and his own ambition to promote the activities of the Catholic Church. In discussing his earlier experiences and background with one of his intimates, it seemed that on the side of both father and mother many of his relatives were affiliated with the cult, and it was recounted how, at an important ceremony at his ancestral habitation, some years before, he had become possessed. But it was also made clear that he had not been any the less active in the affairs of the Church because of this transient experience, nor had he affiliated himself in any way with any *vodun* group. Why he wished once more to participate in the *vodun* rituals cannot be said; certainly during the weeks immediately preceding his possession he had become interested in the philosophy of *vodun*, and his non-voduistic, if not antivoduistic background seemed to accentuate his interest in ascertaining the hold of these rites, which had always been presented to him as repellent, on their followers. As an example of the duality of his interest, it may be stated that though he had remarked how "disgusting" it was to roll in the mud when possessed by Damballa, he had also been im-

pressed with the temerity of those who danced in the fire for Legba. 796 794 787 159

At a certain dance, however, he volunteered to help in a small way in promoting the activities of the evening, such as serving *clairin* to the drummers, while he himself danced the social dance about the central post of the *tonnelle*. As the tempo of the dance heightened, he became more deeply imbued with the spirit of the occasion and shouted: "If the *loa* comes to me, I will accept it!" as he plunged again into the circle of dancers. When the drums sounded the salute to the gods, he would awkwardly execute the accompanying backward turning movement of the figure.

After a time he left the *tonnelle*, but before many moments had elapsed a commotion was heard at the near-by *barrière*, where he was reeling in the first stage of possession, just inside the gate, while a fully possessed woman in a figured dress stalked back and forth. An *adjanikon*, with candle and calabash of water, was trying to "settle" his possession, but he fell to the ground and rolled on his back, lying prostrate with legs and arms outstretched and twitching. The *adjanikon*, putting aside the candle and water, lifted his limp body to its [533] feet and then slowly, according to the accepted pattern, holding [539] him upright, swayed with him in time to the song that all twelve or fifteen persons present were by now singing, until, staggering, the possessed man was able to support himself:

Damballa-o, Damballa-e,	Damballa-o, Damballa-e,
Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,	Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,
'Gadé ça ou fait' moin.	See what you have done to me.

Steadily fixing his eyes on the possessed one, the *adjanikon* now danced with him, turning always in the opposite direction as he offered him the candle and the water, which, how-

796 793 789 159 ever, the man was not yet able to hold. Moving backwards toward the *maison de servitude*, all the spectators continued to sing the song of Damballa, while the man to whom the god had come half-danced and was half-carried up the path to the *tonnelle* and taken into the family house of worship.

[783] When he had sufficiently recovered to be able to hold the candle and the water, he poured the water and unsteadily bowed three times in the accepted manner before the *convert sec* to the Rada gods. He now was enough in control of himself to emerge, and, with the *adjanikon* dancing before him with water and a candle, he once again came into the *tonnelle*, before the drums. As he appeared, the drummers stopped the Ogun rhythm they had been sounding, and in an intense silence all waited for the god to announce himself. Half on his [533] [534] knees before the drums, the one possessed began to sing in a cracked voice:

Damballa Wedo,	Damballa Wedo,
Papa m' c'est coulev'-o,	Papa, I am a serpent-o,
Na poi' bois	There is no tree
Moin pa' li monté.	I cannot climb.

With this initial statement, the Damballa rhythm rolled from the drums, as all echoed the song in chorused response, while the possessed figure, in strict conformity to the pattern, first poured water at the central post and then consecutively before the iron and each of the drums. Returning to the central post, he whirled about it, almost but never quite falling, until he could dance before the drums, awkwardly but acceptably, before he disappeared to rest in a near-by house.

796 789 159 793 The explanation offered by this man of the manner in which he became possessed, and his varying attitudes toward his possession, are revealing. On several previous occasions the *hungan* who officiated at the dance had noticed that he was attending *vodun* rites and had joked with him about his interest in them. Once at an earlier dance this *hungan* had

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given him a piercing glance, not without significance, for as the man, who believed himself the victim of the *hungan's* machinations, said, "Whatever you believe, these *hungans* have some kind of power. . . ." On his arrival at the dance where the possession occurred, the *hungan* had encountered this man sitting alone, some distance from the *tonnelle*. Giving him a drink of liquor, the *hungan*, as he pressed his hand in greeting, sportively turned him about in the manner in which possession is induced. After this the man recollected but little; he did not remember having said he would accept the god, or circling backwards, or bowing to the drums when the "salutes" were played. He dimly remembered having been sent to the *barrière* with some liquor for Bosu, who, not a Rada *loa*, had come unauthorized to one of the spectators and, according to custom, had been removed from the dancing-place. He also just recalled that a woman had become possessed by Legba, but did not know that it was when she touched him that his own possession had begun. The remainder of the night's experience was completely blank, even though the actual state of possession occupied only a small part of it.

Later during the dance, when he had returned, he was heard to say: "It was not a pretty trick that the *hungan* played on me"—a feeling not assuaged when, the next morning at mass, the priest in his sermon preached against following false gods and recounted the miseries in store for those who desert the true faith; nor when he reflected that, by his possession, he had in a sense become affiliated with a group whose position in society was anything but such as to enhance his own social status. The *hungan*, however, promised him that he would not bring on another possession, adding, as an aside: "It is good, though, that a Haitian should have this experience." None the less, to make sure that this *loa bossal* would not come to him at awkward moments, it was going to be necessary for him to baptize it, thus continuing the process which

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796 789 159 some termed his "Haitianization." There were those who expressed surprise at the occurrence, but the majority held that though this man had himself been a devout follower of the Church, and his parents before him, Damballa was a *loa* of his family, and therefore it was reasonable that it should come to him when called at a dance.

796 787 765 159 Another "unauthorized" possession, that of a woman in mourning, was also witnessed. Like the *service* of one night's duration, which this dance followed, it was but poorly organized and provided for, and in this it reflected the status of the family, which had but few resources, since its head had recently come into the valley and therefore lacked the backing which only his own relationship group could give him. Here there was no *maison de servitude*, and the *tonnelle* had been erected in an open field where the only shelter was offered by a crude hut near by. The *hungan* did not appear until late, while the host lived up to his reputation by drinking more *clairin* than was good for him. None the less, one violent possession by a *loa bossal* occurred relatively early in the evening, though the *loa* concerned did not "announce himself" through the song of the one he had possessed.

The woman in mourning sang continuously as she sat among the spectators, and since she was not supposed to dance, she executed dance movements in place. As the drumming became more and more *chaud* — "hot" — she became correspondingly more excited until, suddenly leaping from her seat, she began a frenzied dance. She refused the water and candle, however, and when finished with her dancing, she fell exhausted into her chair, where she remained in a coma during the next hour. She roused herself later and again joined the singing, but though she was near possession, this never came on. Her *loa*, like the other *loa bossal* that came earlier in the evening, did not "announce itself," and since it was her first — and not unwelcome — possession, she stated that at the termination of her period of mourning she would

have a *hungan* divine its identity so that she might thereafter 796
worship it and be under its protection. As in the other case 787
discussed, the personality involved here is not without inter- 765
est. The woman was one of the shrewdest traders in the Mire- 159
balais market, and noted for her hardness. Underneath this, however, the presence of much vital energy could be felt as well as a passionate desire for gayety and attention from members of the other sex. That the essential lack of satisfaction of these drives in her life, as discussed and observed, figured in bringing on her possession cannot be doubted, and, as such, throws significant light on the nature of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon.

These instances, however, must not be thought of as a regu- 796-
lar part of the ritual of the dances. Though a dance was attended almost every Saturday night during the course of an entire summer, and a number of *services* and other *vodun* rites in addition, these were the only occasions when a *loa bossal* appeared. In order, therefore, to document the pattern of the *vodun* dance that has already been given, some of the dances witnessed may be described in outline.

The first of these is a dance which, originally intended as the culmination of the *service* described in the preceding chapter, failed to fulfill its end because of a quarrel between two important members of the family. None the less, it proved to be one of the most spirited and typical dances witnessed. The habitation, when reached shortly after six o'clock, was deserted, except for a few people who seemed to be waiting
disconsolately. Among them were several *hunsi* in white, [794]
and two who carried banners, while the three drums, each [534]
"dressed" in its skirt-like covering, stood before the entrance, the drumsticks and the *ogan* lying on the *barrière* itself. Since the *hungan* had not arrived, one or two of the men present took charge as darkness came on. Before this dance began, it was necessary to introduce the drums ceremonially into the compound, and as this was the first *vodun* dance after the ex-

796 tablishment of the family *maison de servitude*, a special ritual [982] for Legba at the *barrière* was required. The one who took charge threw some rum on the *boucan* that had been made for Legba. Taking a candle, he struck the drum with it; then described *verver* and placed an egg on the white flour he piled 796 578 just inside the *barrière*. The rite proceeded no farther, however, for with the appearance of the head of the family, accompanied by his wife and son, who was the young man who had been possessed by Gede the first night of the *service*, a discussion arose which soon developed into a quarrel, because the family head felt that he had not been notified of this dance in the manner due his position. Finally with the cry: "If anything happens to the family because of this, I am not responsible," he departed in a rage. This was regarded as serious, because should a dance which ended an important rite be held with some of the family absent, the gods might be angered and serious consequences might follow. The woman, who had been instrumental in seeing that the *service* was given and had cared for most of the preparations, bravely decided to continue with the ritual, however, and the drumming was resumed.

796 533 539 [982] Alcohol and flour were thereupon poured on the drumheads, while a number of songs were sung by all present:

Bonjou' manman, bonjou' papa,	Good-day, mamma, good-day, papa,
Ma p' mandé coumen nou' yè	I ask how are you.
Lan Guinée gangnin dent'.	In Guinea there are teeth.
Moin entré, moin entré,	I entered, I entered,
Ou pas salué moin.	You did not greet me.
Agoue-e, hunto	Agowe, hunto (spirit in the drum)
Agasu-e	Agasu-e
Agoué-e hunto, e-o.	Agowe hunto, e-o.

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Jean Pétro,	Jean Pétro,
Depuis moin sorti la ville	Since I left town
Moin apé cassé pié moin.	I have broken my foot.
Ça qui fait petit moun froutć.	That is what makes the children impertinent.
Yawé-é-é	Yawé-é-é,
Gedeniho Mazaca	Gedeniho Mazaca,
M'apé rhélé Saints forts	I call the strong saints,
Yawé-é	Yawé-é-é,
Saints forts-é-é	Strong gods-é-é.
P'ti Garçon Lemba,	Little boy Lemba,
P'ti' pilon ça,	A small pestle he.
Na pilé yo, Lemba-o.	Crush them, Lemba-o.

Finally the instruments were lifted over the *barrière*, the *ogan* and rattles first, then the drums in order from smallest to largest, followed by the spectators. Ahead of the procession were *hunsi* with flags, and all continued singing until the *maison de servitude* and the *tonnelle* used during the *service* were reached. 796 [794]

The drums were carried about the house three times in procession before being taken inside. There, facing the place where the food had been offered — for the house was as yet quite bare, with no suggestion of an altar — the drums were beaten and songs sung to the Rada gods whose sanctuary this was. Though at the moment none of the good drummers had arrived, the drums were placed in line with the north end of the house, and the drumming for the dance commenced. Dancing began about the center pole, but no possessions occurred until shortly after eight o'clock. By that time better drummers had come, and the crowd had so increased that the drums were moved to accommodate those dancing, the drummers now having their backs to the front wall of the sacred house. A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which, 796 [554] [189] A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which, with the lantern that hung near the central post, gave unusually good light. However, as possessions began, the candles on the drums were extinguished as those possessed fell against them, and no more than one could be kept lighted.

773 776 539 776 With the arrival of the *hungan* at about half past nine, the dancing became even more animated, and Ogun "came" as soon as he took over the *manman* drum, but despite this, the *hungan* continued the ritual invocation to call all the *loa:*

Moin rhelé Papa Legba, St. Jo,	I call Papa Legba, St. Joseph.
Moin rhelé Damballa papa,	I call Papa Damballa,
Moin rhelé Papa Damballa, St. Jo,	I call Papa Damballa, St. Joseph,
Moin rhelé Loko Atinsu, St. Jo.	I call Loko Atinsu, St. Joseph.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu,	Life is in the hands of God,
Seigneur, moin rhelé Ogun Ferraille, St. Jo.	Master, I call Ogun Ferraille, St. Joseph.
Moin rhelé Damballa Wedo,	I call Damballa Wedo,
Moin rhelé Aida Wedo, Seigneur.	I call Aida Wedo, Master.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu.	Life is in the hands of God.
Moin rhelé Papa Agasu, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Papa Agasu, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Malt' Ossange,	I call Master Ossange,
Moin rhelé Malt' St. Jean,	I call Master St. John,
Moin rhelé Gran' Siligbo,	I call Gran' Siligbo,
Moin rhelé Agwe Woyo,	I call Agwe Woyo,
Moin rhelé Loa 'Bitation,	I call the *loa* of the habitation,

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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ABOVE, *A vodun altar: both Catholic and African religious symbols are to be seen.*
BELOW, *Mystical designs traced in cornmeal on the ground about a shrine.*

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[facing P. 192]

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AT A VODUN DANCE

ABOVE, *The dancers crowding about the central post of the shelter.*
BELOW, *Drums and drummers.*

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[facing p. 193]

Moin rhelé Aizan,	I call Aizan,
Moin rhelé Sobo, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Sobo, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Papa Gede,	I call Papa Gede,
Moin rhelé toutes mystères.	I call all the gods.

When he had ended his song a number of the "salutes" 786
were played on the drums, to which all danced backward in 787
circles, ending the figure in bows before the drums, which [illegible]
were rolling out the call. In the course of the evening a large number of gods were summoned, but, as would be expected, only the *loa* of the family came to this ceremony. Possessions [776]
were observed for Legba, Damballa, Ogun Balandjo, Ogun Galloné, Ogun Ferraille, Gede, and Kadya Bossu. St. John, Ossange, Aizan, Ashadé Bokor, Gran' Bossu, Magie, Jean Pétro, Congo, Guinée, Sobo, Bade, and Agwe Woyo, were the *loa* who refused their summons. Though no deity held the center of the stage for too long a time, the evening was notable because it was marked by an unusually large number of Ogun and Damballa possessions, which seemed constantly to alternate. Damballa being the stronger *loa*, his appearance when Ogun was present necessitated the retirement of the latter; but since the possession of Ogun by one woman was particularly persistent, this god returned again and again. As at a [533]
number of dances, the *haut chant* for Ogun Galloné, the French marching-song that salutes the "general," was among the songs heard, when those possessed by the god skipped from one end of the *tonnelle* to the other before the drums.

One particularly striking Damballa possession came on suddenly. As a tall, strong man was seized by the god, he gave a great shout and grasped the beams of the *tonnelle,* disappearing upward through the thatch. For a moment it did not seem that he had climbed on the roof of the *tonnelle,* until a head and arms which appeared between the palm fronds showed he

796 787 [794] was there. To bring him down, a *hunsi* holding water and a candle at once began slowly to dance under him, fixing him with the usual unvarying stare. After some five minutes the candle and water were quickly given to those near by, and in a flash the possessed one was safely on the ground, candle in hand, pouring water before the center pole and the drums, and dancing magnificently.

796 793 787 593 Shortly after midnight the head of the family and his wife returned to the scene of the dance, the explanation given for this return revealing the native conception of the power of the *hungan*. Before his arrival, it was said he had been told of the quarrel; hence on his way to the dance he passed the *barrière* of the house of the family head, though he did not stop to speak with him. Prior to leaving his home, however, he was supposed to have performed a rite which, soon after he began drumming at the dance, so affected the children of the family head that they became possessed and at once ran to the *tonnelle*. Since their children were present, the father and mother were forced to come, and this was followed by a reconciliation of those who had quarreled. To make doubly sure that the *loa* would take no offense, however, another dance which formally ended the *service* was given jointly by all members of the family several weeks later.

796 787 One phase of the ceremonial always encountered, but unusually frequent on this occasion, was the salutation of the assembled company by the *loa*. One woman, possessed by Ogun, greeted all present first by shaking hands with wrists crossed in the customary manner, and then kissing each person on both cheeks. Another, possessed by Ossange, took the neckerchief from about his neck and wiped the faces of all those present, paying particular attention to the drummers. The son of the family head was again possessed by Gede as at the *service*, and his greeting to the assembled company was especially dramatic. His possession took the form of a hysteri-

cal, rapid, continuous jumping, with the body held rigid. As he bobbed up and down, holding his candle under his chin so that the light distorted his features and emphasized the vacant stare in his eyes, he monotonously repeated the sharp sounds of his god: "*Ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke!*" or "*Hoi! Hoi! Hoi!*" Standing before some, he would greet them by taking their crossed hands in his strong grip and bringing them down in a single movement that shook the entire body. Once he removed the red kerchief he wore, extending it as an indication he wished gifts of money; he used it to wipe the perspiration from the faces of others; while he would merely run his hands through the hair of still others.[*] 796 787

As daybreak neared, the crowd thinned, so that by half past five few of the good drummers or important men remained. Persons who had been sleeping roused themselves, and there was a general exodus. Most of those who had been at the dance did not go to sleep, however, for early Sunday morning mass an hour later found them at the church saying their prayers and listening to the sermon of the priest. 796

In contrast, another dance visited was noteworthy for its many and varied possessions. It was held at the habitation of one of the fathers-in-law of a *hungan*, and began somewhat later, the drums not arriving until almost eight o'clock. Only a minor ceremony was necessary to bring them through this gateway. The host three times poured water inside the gate, while three men played on the drums and a fourth tapped the *ogan* for a moment. The proceedings began when an elderly *hunsi* summoned Legba, invoking in her song Siligho Vavou, Dahomey, Ogun, Bade, and "all *loa*." The *hungan* who was host himself arrived at nine o'clock, and the excellence of his drumming caused one possession to follow another with great rapidity. The dance was a large one, and by midnight there were at least two hundred persons in attendance, while at one time fifty or more were dancing about the central post and as many as seven or eight were possessed at once. 796 787 [533]

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many as seven or eight were possessed at once. During the night of this dance the following thirty-one *loa* "came" in the order named:

Ouange Damballa Wedo
Sobo
Bomba
Congo
Si Adaman
Simbi Djo
Agau Tènèrè
Damballa
Odamil Yewe
Ogun Ferraille
Bosu Trois Cornes
Bosu d'l'eau
Simbi (*nan* d'l'eau)
Damballa Wedo
Simbi Kita
Papa Loko Dahomey
Ogun Batala
Ogun Batagri
Ogun Balandjo
Ogun Shango
Mait' Ogun
Ogun Ferraille
Ogun Ashadé
Ibo Lélé
Ouange
Agau (Mait' Woyo)
Mait' Aiman
Shango
Damballa
Simbi en Deux Eaux
Bosu

The only deity that was called but failed to respond was Gran' Bra. And it is to be noted that both Rada and Pétro gods "came" in response to the summons, though *loa* of the two categories were not present under the *tonnelle* at the same time. Each person possessed was looked after very carefully, women's ear-rings being taken off so that they would not be lost, the contents of men's pockets being emptied, and knives always being removed from their sheaths. When one man was violently possessed by Papa Loko Dahomey and danced "strongly," attempts were made to wrest from him the walking-stick he carried. They were not successful, however, and all dodged him as he brandished it. The *hungan* host was always present to take the possessed one inside the house which formed one side of the *tonnelle*, to "treat" him.

A number of comments on the possessions by several of the

gods may be made. Si Adaman, known as a *loa* Dominicaine, 787
possessed a woman who, with another possessed by Sobo, came 796
to greet the white visitors and ask for *kola*, a non-alcoholic 796
drink much desired by Rada gods. The woman possessed by Agasu Tèmèré was also at one time or another during this dance "mounted" by ten other *loa*. On one occasion, when possessed by this Rada deity, she went to the *barrière* because under the *tonnelle* they were dancing for Simbi — "who is not of my family." Asking another dancer to whom Sobo had come to accompany her, she sang "Saddle and bridle my mount for me," and "Sobo goes with Agasu; he stays in my house." Historically this is significant, since Agasu is the deified ancestor of the royal Dahomean sib, and Sobo the Dahomean god of thunder.

Bosu Trois Cornes came violently to a young girl dressed in red. She was taken inside the house against which the *tonnelle* had been erected, and while a number of men held her, the *hungan* worked over her. She was in a dangerous state, for 'Ti Kita Demembré, who is much feared, often goes with Bosu, and in this instance of what was said to be a first possession was believed to be "not far away" because of the rigidity with which the arms of the girl were held, in positions almost to dislocate them. The *hungan* scolded the *loa* — "Be off! You are not wanted here!" After the girl had been brought far enough through her possession to pour water and take a candle before the drums, she was sent home, carefully attended. It was held absolutely essential that there be no delay before baptizing her *loa* and sending away its harmful companions; otherwise, when possession next occurred, she might do harm to herself.

Early in the morning one of the several visiting *hungans* 796
became possessed by Damballa, and, imitating the serpent, 787
climbed through the roof of the *tonnelle*. The priest who was host, after bringing him down, danced with him, carrying his guest, still possessed, about the dancing-space on his back as

996 787 a great outcry of acclamation was heard from those present. Afterwards the visitor, always under the influence of his god, greeted everyone with the crossed-arm handshake of the *loa*,* and ended by dancing opposite the young woman to whom so many gods came — now possessed by still another deity.

996 546 This dance offered an especially striking demonstration of the hold of the Church on the people of Mirebalais. Feeling that motion pictures of an actual *vodun* dance should be made available so that the real nature of the ceremony could be demonstrated and comparisons made between the Haitian and Dahomean practices of which his visitors had told him, the *hungan* himself made all effort to continue the dance until the morning light would permit pictures to be taken; as an inducement to remain, additional *clairin* and biscuits were provided. As daylight approached, however, on one of the few mornings when no early fog obscured the light, the participants began to slip away, so that by sunrise only the usual fifteen or twenty young folk shuffling about the central post were to be seen. Later, in the village, the procession held the first Sunday of each month before the principal mass of the day passed through the square. Many of those who, as dancers or possessed ones, had been active in this *vodun* dance could be seen in it; while next to the priest himself marched the woman who had been possessed by her eleven *vodun* gods during the night just ended.

CHAPTER XI

THE CULT OF TWINS AND OF THE DEAD

SHARING powers and prerogatives with the *loa* in the super- 776
natural world are the souls of the dead, the spirits of twins, 769
and, in a specialized sense, magic, all working parts of a uni- 845
verse the ultimate force in which is God, who is sometimes 184
spoken of as its Gran' Mait'. Their relative importance, how- [771)
ever, is not easy to determine; and much less the manner in which the supernatural personalities in these divisions are linked with one another. Therefore, when such problems are presented to a group of Haitians, as whether or not the dead become *loa*, or the spirits of twins are related to those of the dead, or whether twins are the equivalent of the *loa*, or what the role of all these in magic may be, different opinions will always be heard.

One of these matters was explained by an elderly *hunsi* as follows: "*Marassa gagné morts longtemps, li deviennent loa* — Twins who have been dead a long time become *loa*," and "*Gagné gran' moun morts longtemps, deviennent loa* — There are those long dead who become *loa*," and she added: "But how this happens, I do not know." Despite a flat contradiction of this opinion by a man who was present, and a heated discussion between them, she persisted in maintaining the

776 769 845 184 correctness of her view, while making an honest avowal of her inability to explain how this came about. On another occasion discussion turned upon the manner in which the powers of these supernatural beings are conceived in various parts of Haiti. Said one *hungan:* " Twins are stronger than the saints (the *loa*). The *marassa* are the mothers of the saints. So it is said at Arcahaie." The reply came: " In Mirebalais they say the saints are stronger."

During a lively discussion of the point by a group of active voduists the suggestion was made by one that the relative power of the *loa*, the dead, and the twins might be determined if the numerical strength of the following of each cult could be roughly ascertained. Since all give sacrifices for the dead — even strict Church members — and all who worship the *loa* give for the *loa* and the dead, while only some of this latter group give for the *loa*, the twins, and the dead, the person who had suggested this line of inquiry concluded that the dead were therefore strongest, because no one dared ignore them. Still another opinion, though in agreement with this, was based rather on the fact that the *loa* always exhibit fear before manifestations of death, as at dances where persons possessed by Damballa or Aida Wedo avoid those possessed by Gede, since he stands so close to the dead. However, it was pointed out by others in Mirebalais that the most costly and elaborate offerings are for the *loa*, that those for the dead are smaller, and those given the twins are least impressive, which was evidence enough for them that the *loa* are the most powerful of these three categories. All agreed, however, in ascribing to the twins the least power of the three, though what the *marassa* do for good or evil they do with intensity and dispatch.

184 776 769 845 There is ample justification, on both theological and historical grounds, for placing twins and the dead in a single general category. For, as one educated Haitian put it in pointing out that both twins and dead are worshipped on the same day, "*Marassa et morts font une chapitre pour nous* — The twins and the dead make a single chapter for us."

twins and the dead make a single chapter for us." This point 171
of view is supported by a study of the twin cult as found in that 174
part of West Africa from which so much of Haitian culture 776
came, where a single category of the supernatural world, com- 769
prising all ancestors, includes both twins and the dead, as 845
well as all others "who have passed through the womb of a
woman." As might be expected, the concept is more elabo-
rated in West Africa than in Haiti; but the important point
is that in Haiti, though less explicitly formulated, it has
persisted.

To worship twins it is not necessary either for a family to 845
number them among its members of this generation, or to 769
have included them within the memory of those living, for it
is sufficient if a tradition exists that twins had once been born
to some member of the family. If the twins are alive or lived
in recent times, sacrifices are given both at Christmas and at
harvest time; otherwise only at Christmas. Some families, in-
deed, worship twins because a *hungan* has divined that their
unknown ancestors in "Guinée" had included them. There
are still others who decide to worship the *marassa* without the
advice of a diviner, because certain benefits are believed to
come to those who worship twins, because of their power for
good or evil.[1]

The source of this power is vague; one characteristic an- 845
swer to a question concerning it was: "Their power comes
from God. Do we ourselves know how twins are made?" It [776]
is agreed, however, that St. Nicholas is their spiritual father [773]
— an opinion based on the tale of this saint, held to have been
a sorcerer who, in very early times, killed three *marassa* (the
twins themselves and the *dosu*, or child after twins) and salted
them away in a barrel. The mother of the children came to
him to offer up her prayers, and, touched by her sorrow, he
resuscitated them, since when he has been their "father." The
power of twins, whatever its source, is very real to the Hai-
tians. They are believed to be able to predict rain, for ex- [787]

845 ample, long before ordinary folk.[1] If promised offerings in the
[789] event of an ample harvest, their aid in bringing about this
[782] desired end is even more fruitful than that of the *loa* or the
[769] dead, who are therefore appealed to only indirectly.

Twins, however, are capricious beings, ready to do harm if they are not humored. Consequently, twins must be given anything they ask for, and it is especially important to provide them with the clothes they covet, when giving a *mangé*
[153] *marassa*. If their father fails to provide these new clothes, they will *kembé* (seize) him, and he may at once have an attack of fever or a bad toothache or earache; or, more likely still, he will be seriously constipated, since this is the punishment particularly favored by the *marassa*, just as the *loa* most fre-
845 quently send dysentery, and the dead cause headaches. If lack
599 of resources makes it impossible to provide what they demand,
828 a painstaking explanation must be given them or they will drive a person mad in the manner recounted in the following *marassa* myth:

> There were once twins, one good and one evil. They were working a field with another brother, but the evil one refused to help. The other two, therefore, said they would not give him any food. Because of this the evil twin drove the third brother insane. After they had long prayed that he reconsider, he finally agreed to restore sanity to his brother, but insisted on inflicting deafness as a punishment, so that this brother was deaf until he died.

845 At the birth of twins, special "twin plates" are provided
778 when their birth is announced to the *loa* — either before or
[769] after their Church baptism — where offerings to the spirits of twins are placed. Usually paired, the plates may be three in number, in which case the third is for the *dosu*, the child born after twins, who is believed to be even more powerful than twins themselves and is thus an important figure in the cult.

Preferably, these cult objects are made of pottery, joined by 845
a ligature in twos or threes, as required. The plates rest in a 778
box or on a small table which stands in a corner of an inner
room of the house. If the family worshipping the twins is a
poor one, joined calabashes or wooden plates are acceptable,
and such are found more often in the valley of Mirebalais
than pottery plates. The "altar" made by the plates is com- (776)
pleted by an *image* — a chromolithograph — of the twin
saints, Comas and Damien, placed on the wall above them.

The principal rite of the twin cult is the *mangé marassa.* 845
A minor ceremony, if the family has living twins or twins 769
recently dead, it is held, as has already been said, at Christmas
and at harvest time; otherwise only at Christmas. Yams and
salt fish are separately cooked, and a dish of beans mixed with
olive oil is provided. In the morning this food is taken to a
closed room, where it is deposited both in the *marassa* plates
and in ordinary containers placed for those who attend the
rite. As the offering is made, songs such as the following are 845
sung: 769
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Marassa, m'a pé mandé,	Spirit of twins, I ask,
Ça wé la si 'ou content?	Are you content with what you see there?
Ago-e-e.	*Ago-e-e.*
Adoré nan pié Damballa,	Worship at the tree of Damballa,
Ago-e-e.	*Ago-e-e.*
Marassa bra,	Twins of the forest,
Marassa carrefour,	Twins of the crossroad,
M'a pé mandé,	I ask,
Ça wé la si 'ou content?	Are you content with what you see there?
Adoré nan pié humfort,	Worship at the *humfort,*
Assuré-e, ago!	Care for us, *ago!*
Marassa dé, trois, quatre,	Twins two, three, four,

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M'a pé mandé,	I ask,
Ça wé la si 'ou content?	Are you content with what you see there?

The food is eaten the same afternoon. If the twins are actually alive, everything they wear must be new and they must have identical clothes. At the sacrifice of the January harvest, native rice, cakes, okra, bananas, and one, two, or three chickens, designated by the twins themselves, are offered. The food is put in place, and as songs are sung it is left until the following day, when it is eaten. The worship of
[184] twins differs markedly in various parts of Haiti. In Leogane, for example, some have such a ceremony only at harvest time, and have a greater *mangé marassa* every five years, when a goat and a chicken are killed and offered with the usual non-animal foods.

845 Twins stand in a peculiarly intimate relation to each other,
[171] as might be expected from the traditional African belief that
[184] twins share a single soul, which, as far as could be determined, only survives in attitude in Mirebalais. Should one die, the
[769] living twin must put aside a bit of all food he eats, or a small part of any gift given him, for the other. If the twins are both girls, the attempt is usually made to have them betrothed and married at about the same time. If the female twin of a pair is married, she must give a present to her twin brother, and similarly her husband sees to it that his wife's male twin also receives a substantial gift from him as a peace offering, for it is dangerous to wait until the other decides on some overt mischief. The perplexing factor in dealing with twins is that they themselves often do not consciously will the trouble they bring. For example, should the twin of a married woman not feel friendly toward his sister's husband, though he might make a conscious effort to overcome this dislike, his spirit might proceed to use its full power to harass the man in such a way as to trouble the relationship of the couple.

The cult of the dead [3] is to be differentiated from the wor- 769
ship of the *loa* and from the twin cult in that its African form 177
has been modified to a far greater extent than these others by
the influence of the Catholic Church. Yet, though the modes
in which respect is shown the dead are principally those of
the Church, the attitudes and beliefs which underlie the cult
—the meticulousness with which the tranquillity of the dead
is insured, the fear in which they are held, and, above all,
their close association with magic as an important sanction
behind this force—all these take on a distinctly African
tinge. Perhaps the point of view taken toward the dead, and
the manner in which the living cope with their power, can
best be set forth at the outset by giving a sketch of the pattern
of funerary and post-funeral rites, since these form the basis
of the entire cult.

Wailing by all present begins with the approach of death. 763
There are cries such as: "*Adieù, bon Dieu, Manman ma-o,* 764
wai, wai! J[illegible]li-a tel-ei-tel quitté mouwi! Côté m'ap wé li enco'?
—Good-by, O good God, O my mother, *wai, wai!* Today such-
and-such a one has died! Where will I see him again?" The
members of the family tie white or black kerchiefs about their
waists, while others present use kerchiefs of any color at hand.
The doors of any *humfort* or *maison de servitude* in the habi- [346]
tation are closed, and thorny acacia branches are placed in
front of them, so that the dead, who are believed to go about
everywhere, cannot "spoil" the sacred place by entering it.

The body is laid in a shallow trench dug in the floor of the 764
room, and there washed and prepared for the funeral by a
professional *baigneur des morts*—man or woman according
to the sex of the dead—and his assistants. Some member of
the family watches them to see that the "three drops" of [754]
moisture believed to be in every dead person's mouth are
not caught on a cloth when the body is turned over, for they
are held to have great potency for the working of black magic,
and a sorcerer would give a great deal for them. Cold water,

764 to which orange leaves and alcohol have been added, and soap are used to bathe the corpse, though limes are substituted for [198] orange leaves if the dead was tubercular.[4] In earlier days caolin (white lime) — sacred in Africa — was mixed with the water, but this is no longer done. The corpse is turned on its face to permit the washing of side and back, and the body is dried with a towel, while the soiled water is either thrown into a small ravine or into a hole dug for the purpose.

764 775 The corpse is next dressed in new clothing, unless the one who died owned a wardrobe which included black garments. No buttons or pins are used on new clothes, which are sewn into place, and if the body is dressed in clothing he wore while alive, the pockets are torn so that nothing can be [198] carried away in them. Shoes were at one time put into the coffin — or sandals in the country — beside the dead, rather than on his feet, so that he would not be tempted to walk, but today in Mirebalais and the surrounding country the dead are buried barefoot or in stocking feet, since, as it was explained, "otherwise they make too much noise as they go about." Black stockings are always used. In the coffin are placed a rosary, a scapulary, soap, a comb, a handkerchief, a pipe (if the dead had been a smoker), and face powder; but no strong drink is included because, were the spirit of the dead person to become drunk, this would be dangerous; and no money, for if so much as a single sou were given the dead, he would return and take the rest of the family wealth. Similarly no food is put in the coffin, for otherwise it is believed that the ghost would be so busy eating he would never find the route to the sky. Pins are carefully excluded, because if the dead were given sharp objects, he would return to prick 764 775 754 824 the family. If it is suspected that death had been caused by sorcery, and the soul of the dead may later be taken to aid in working black magic, some plants of the type called *hoholi* are placed in the coffin with the body. These plants are said to contain so many seeds that since one who comes to take the

dead must first count them, he can never accomplish this before 764 daylight. From these precautions, it is evident that for 775 the Haitian the reality of existence after death is no fictional [754] one, as is even more vividly illustrated in the answer given to [824] the question whether or not a flute, such as young boys play, would be placed in the coffin of a lad: " What! And have the dead going about all the time blowing it? "[8]

When dressed, the body is placed on a mat or mattress or 764 in a hammock and covered with a clean cloth. A *bande de machoire*, which goes under the chin and over the head to hold the jaw in place, in earlier days, as today in remote sections of the valley, served the double purpose of making possible the identification of a ghost as such, and of keeping the moisture inside the mouth. At present, however, it is usually removed when the body is placed in the coffin. In earlier times also, as today among the peasants in the hills, the nostrils and ears were plugged with cotton. The body and head are shaved [302] of all hair, and the finger- and toe-nails clipped; hair and clippings are later placed in the coffin and buried with the body. The eyes usually close naturally; it is a bad sign if they do not, [826] indicating, as it does, that magic has caused death. Putrefac- [789] tion, or any unusual sign connected with death such as when [754] a cadaver swells, or a body remains warm and perspires, or, as mentioned, when the eyes remain open, is held to be an indication that the soul has been taken by a sorcerer and the person "sold"—all signalling a "bad" death and requiring that a dagger be struck into the body and burial take place immediately.

Some time later, the *prêt' savanne* comes to read prayers if [793] the death has occurred in the countryside, or the priest of the local Catholic church if in the town or near it. After the prayers have been said and relatives and friends have addressed the dead and "given him commissions," such as "Say good-day to my mother," "Ask my father to help us, for the weather has been bad this year for the crops . . ." the body is

764 placed in the coffin, which must always be used for burial. Even if a person is poor, " he can always borrow a plank from a neighbor, for people are charitable in matters of death," or, if a family cannot immediately afford to have carpenters make the coffin, they are paid later, a few gourdes at a time. This [767] also holds for the professional bather of corpses, who receives three to five gourdes in the countryside, fifteen gourdes in Mirebalais, and, it is said, perhaps fifty in Port-au-Prince. A pig or a goat is killed to feed those who dig the grave and carry the coffin, " so they can do their work well." Otherwise these men receive no payment, for " people do such things for each other."

The wake,* which takes place on the night of death, is one of the most important ceremonies in the cycle of rites for the [766] [851] dead. Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. During the wake the body lies in the second room of the house, the long white candle used at the deceased's first communion standing lighted at his feet. If the dead was not a communicant, newly bought candles are placed at his head and feet. The wife and children either stay with the corpse or are near by with friends. The one who bathed the corpse remains constantly at its side as the members of the family come and go, since the body must never remain alone. Wailing goes on all night, and as more relatives arrive, those already there echo their cries.

On a table in another room a white cloth is spread, and a crucifix, images of the saints, flowers, lighted candles, and a [533] lamp of oil are placed on it. The singers bring their songbooks, since the canticles of the Church are almost the only songs heard. At times songs are specially composed for the occasion, but these always concern themselves with death. Those who stand before the table, principally women, lead the singing, the others acting as a chorus. People come and go

People come and go

and, wearying of the singing, join the group outside the house, 764
where those playing games and the story-tellers are gathered. 524
One popular game is "forfeits," and a forfeit, if reclaimed by a girl, requires the singing of a *chanson de romance*, or if by a man, calls for the recitation of a poem or a humorous folktale. Before a forfeit is returned, all sing to a hand-clapping [533]
accompaniment: [539]

C'est bien bon,	It is very good.
C'est bien bon,	It is very good,
Aha!	Aha!

Card-games, such as *mariai* (marriage), *trois-sept,* and *bezique,* are also played. All these games are entered into with zest, for an important purpose in holding the wake is to amuse the dead, whose body lies near by, and thus send him away in good humor. When drinks are passed, the recipients must 764
make three libations before drinking, one explanation hold- [782]
ing that this is in accordance with the formula Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, another that the offering is for the *loa*, the dead, and the *marassa*. At about five o'clock in the morning the angelus closes the wake, after which most of those present leave, and only close friends and relatives remain to help with preparations for the funeral. This must take place the day following death, not only because of a legal requirement, but because of the fact that were a body to remain unburied for two nights, the expense of two wakes would have to be met. Before the ceremony of burial takes place, small children are [775]
often passed over the coffin three times, in leave-taking, that [788]
the spirit of the dead may not return for them.

The funeral itself is held in accordance with the rites of the Church, the difference between funerals consisting principally in the elaborateness of the ritual and the length of time the church bells are tolled, which in turn is determined by the ability of the family of the dead to meet the varying fees. Thus at the funeral of the mother of the *député* from Mire-

764 balais the setting was most elaborate, in striking contrast to the bareness of the rites for a young man who was a *'ti moun* in a town family and came from poor peasant folk in the hills. Whatever the type of funeral, the coffin, carried by four men, leaves the house of death preceded by the priest and his acolytes. After mass has been sung, the priest and mourners walk in procession to the graveyard, where the body is placed in a tomb if one has been prepared for it, or interred underground, awaiting the building of a tomb. Before his death, should a person in a quarrel decree that certain others must never touch his coffin, and should these for the sake of public opinion attempt to carry it, it is believed that the coffin will fall to the ground. Such occurrences are extremely rare and cause a great deal of gossip. Following the funeral, friends sometimes remain with the mourners for several days, caring for the house and doing the cooking; otherwise the women of the household are obliged to take up their work at once. The trench which held the body during the washing is filled in as soon as the corpse is taken from the house, and a smudge of orange leaves is made "to take away the odor of death." Objects employed in the last illness, such as the mat on which the body lay and the towel used to dry the corpse, are taken to a large river and washed, after which they may be used by the heirs, provided death did not result from a contagious disease. Work in the fields is also resumed a few days after the funeral, for custom does not dictate when the mourners may again take up their tasks.

765 Next in the cycle of the rituals of death is the *dernière prière,* which ends a novena.[7] It was stated that the novena must begin on the Saturday after burial, so that it might end on a Sunday night, but one such ceremony actually occurred on a Friday night, which would be in accordance with the assertion that the *dernière prière* may take place on Monday, Friday, or Saturday nights. Others, however, maintained that this is only town custom, and that in the countryside this rite

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[782]
[793]

always takes place on a Sunday. The prayers of the novena, whatever week-day they may begin, are recited either by the priest, if in town, or by a *prêt' savanne*. The family and a few friends, who gather to hear the prayers and to sing hymns, take their places about a table covered with a white cloth, on which are placed *images* of the saints, a crucifix, two candles which must burn for the nine days, and two bouquets of flowers. A lamp of oil in a glass with a floating wick must also burn day and night. Each session of the novena lasts some two hours, and no refreshments are served those who attend.

On the day of the *dernière prière* those invited come to help cover the walls of the room with white sheets — sometimes the ceiling is also covered — and hang white curtains over doors and windows. Wreaths are placed on the table and attached to the sheets on the walls, and *images* of the saints are pinned to the white table-cloth as it hangs down. Liquor, cakes, *kola*, *clairin* and other refreshments are made ready, according to the family means, these being held so essential that if the family lacks the funds at the moment to provide them, the novena may be stopped on the eighth day, and the *dernière prière* postponed for a month or even two. The same [533] type of song is sung at this rite as at wakes, and the mourners wail once again, though not so loudly as just after the occurrence of death. At about eleven o'clock, after having recited the last prayer of the novena, a *libera* is sung to "drive the dead from the house," since now they are through with him — followed by an *adoration* for the *prêt' savanne*. Since, un- [793] [765] like the custom at *vodun* ceremonies, these coins are his entire fee for the novena as well as for this evening's ceremony, he sees to it that the song which marks it continues until all members of the family have donated a sum that he regards adequate. The *adoration* over, the refreshments are passed, so that the *dernière prière* most often ends at midnight, though those in attendance sometimes remain until morning, playing games, telling stories, and singing canticles as at wakes.

769 On the following night the *mangé mort* is held, when sacrifices are given the recent and earlier dead of the family. The day is used for preparing the food, after which a table is set as for a dinner, with plates, knives, forks, salt and pepper; and sometimes chairs are placed, though this is not necessary, since it is felt that the dead prefer to eat standing. Chicken, rice, and many other types of dishes are provided, so that the tastes of all the dead may be satisfied. A stew of maize, red beans, salt beef, and pigs' feet cooked with peppers and spices are included for the *morts Guinée*. Under the table are two wooden food-containers, one for the children of the family, the other for the dogs of the household.

Shortly after darkness has fallen, the room containing the table is locked, to remain closed for some two hours, while the family, a few friends, and the *prêt' savanne* pray and sing canticles as they wait for the dead to do their feasting. Before the prayers an announcement is made for whom the food is being given; the known dead of the family are called by name, while "those drowned, those shot," and "those who come from the four corners of the earth" are also summoned. When it is judged that the dead have finished their meal, the *prêt' savanne* or an elder of the family knocks three times on the closed door before he enters and takes up a cup of sacred water and a sprig of orange leaves, with which he blesses the table by sprinkling it. He then carries one of the wooden containers to the gateway and, turning to the children, asks them three times: "*Nous content?*—Are you satisfied?" to which the answer: "*Oui!*" is given. The priest makes a motion as though to place the container on the ground, but instead raises it again, repeating this maneuver for each of the four corners of the earth before he finally puts it down, whereupon all the children rush forward, each striving to obtain as much food as he can. When the children have finished eating, they wipe [976] their hands on the hair of the mistress of the house, saying: "*Grâce misé'corde.*" The family then take the other con-

The family then take the empty con-
tainer to a crossroad, where it is deposited as an offering for 769
Legba, and its contents are eaten by the dogs, who significantly, [782]
in Dahomey are the animals sacred to this deity. Following
this, the adults enter the closed room, to feast at the
laden table.

Several days after the funeral two gourdes are paid a priest [793]
— "a real one," not a *prêt' savanne* — to chant a *libera* at the [765]
grave, a rite that must be repeated each year on All Saints'
Day. Each year, also, food is given the dead, though "not so
much as following a funeral." Chickens, beans, rice, and coffee
are the principal part of such an offering, for which no priest
need be called, as the ceremony is merely to let the dead know
that they are not forgotten. Every three or five years, however,
a large *mangé* must be given for all the family dead, and if held [535]
on the family habitation, there is social dancing, where such
favorites of the ancestors as the *martinique,* the *banda,* the
calebasse, and the *zesse* are danced.*

Differences in procedure mark various modes of death. 766
When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace
must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a
one has no "last prayer," because, death by lightning being
a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made
an oath which he subsequently violated. Those killed by lightning [171]
or who die of smallpox are not mourned, but no explanation
could be obtained for this obvious survival of African
custom. If a leper has concealed his disease, mourning is
worn for him, though if the cause of death is generally known
this is forgone. There is customarily no mourning for suicides, [762]
and never where the regulations of the Church are rigorously
applied.

If the dead person was a *vodun* priest or otherwise had 764
strong *connaissance,* steps are taken before his death to "re- 766
move the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under 776
the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to 775
be powerful spirits which may cause their family much harm

764 766 if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is
776 not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar.
775 The *hungan* who performs the rite of removing these *loa* is
764 preferably himself a member of the family and is usually left
766 alone with one or two assistants and an elderly relative of the
776 dead, but if the family includes no *hungan*, the one who is
793 called, even though greatly trusted, is most carefully watched, because a strange priest might take for himself the valued gods of the dead, leaving only the weak ones. The *hungan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, with which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.

766 No special purification is needed for a house where death
764 has occurred except when the deceased was tubercular or a
786 leper, when everything except his money is buried or thrown in some unfrequented place. The body of one who has died of smallpox, though washed, is buried as soon after death as possible without being enclosed in a coffin. Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard, the lepers and victims of smallpox being separated from the others, for the Church declares these have died of the plague. One who drowns is buried at the riverside where his body is recovered, though if the corpse is not too badly decomposed, the authorities give permission, and the family of the dead can afford the expense of transportation, the body may be brought home. Children are
561 buried in the cemetery, but, on the principle that "the young
771 must serve their elders," the funeral of a child is attended only by those relations who are younger than the dead; for in Haiti, as in Africa, it is not held seemly that the young should be followed to the grave by their elders. At the house, however,

766 older relatives participate in the rites as at any death; moreover, the rule *gran' moun pas sui' 'ti moun* holds only where a father, mother, grandparent, or older sister or brother is concerned.*

76 Unless the dead was known to be a sorcerer his house is not abandoned. If, unlike most of his kind, a reputed sorcerer is survived by children, they continue to live in his house, and though no gesture of marked social disapprobation is made, few persons attend the funeral and fewer still put foot inside the house afterwards, which means there is little of the habitual calling on the survivors. An abandoned house of this type is called *caille yun moun lou' garou* — the house of a werewolf. [925] [787] If a stranger were to buy such a house, he would first have to "restrain" the evil spirits who continued there. Generally, however, a man will not buy land unless a diviner ascertains that no evil beings have ever been associated with it.

775 Such, in outline, are the principal rites for the dead and the outer manifestations of the sanctions which validate the cult for its followers. Fundamentally, these derive from the power which the dead wield in the world of the living — power that is held to come directly from God, who has not only given the dead all the rights of the living, but also the right to return to earth as ghosts. There are several types of dead, two of these being the *zien-ziens* and the *zombi*. The *zien-ziens* are ordinary ghosts; the latter, who will be discussed in the next chapter, are those whose souls have been "sold" by sorcerers and are therefore doomed to wander the earth until their destined time arrives to return to God. Still another type of dead are the ghosts of children who die before baptism, called *lutins*, who ride young horses, so that when a wild colt with a tangled mane is seen, it is said that a *lutin* has been on his back. The souls of the dead are held first to go to God in the sky, where they are condemned to purgatory or hell or permitted to remain in paradise; "It is God who creates, therefore when someone dies, he returns to Him." And as for the effect of pur-

775 gatory on those who are possessed by *loa* who go unharmed in fire, it is said: " It is the *loa* that go into the fire. The soul is another thing."

All agree that the dead do not possess folk in the manner of the *loa*, as might be expected from the fact that the most important rituals in the cult of the dead are not only dominated by the Church, but carried out by its priest. In the matter of consulting the dead when questions of importance for the family are involved, however, there is no consensus of opinion. The most widespread point of view holds that only those dead whose *loa* have not been removed from their heads can be summoned, and that this is done only to permit them to " go to God," so their souls may be at rest. Otherwise, " when the dead are called, it is a matter of magic, for the dead are never good and one always must fear them." And though a
789 Mait' 'Bitation that is an old, old ancestor may " mount the
775 head " of a member of the family, he would never be specially called and in most cases, if he did come, would be " re-
[869] strained." On the other hand, it was recounted how during the Caco rebellion the soul of Dessalines was brought into a jar and asked for his counsel. It is said, however, that he was so angered at the consistent defeats sustained by the Haitians that he struck everyone to earth and roundly scolded them for having lost the liberty with which he endowed them, departing without giving the desired advice. And since the spirits of Christophe and Toussaint are believed to be even stronger, no one had sufficient courage to summon them!

765 The immediate nature of the relation between the dead and the living is best seen in the conventions and attitudes surrounding the wearing of mourning, which is required of all children of the deceased, whether " legitimate " or other-
[822] wise. Black is worn twelve months for a father, eighteen months for a mother; and half-mourning — black and white — is worn for a sister, brother, cousin, uncle, or aunt. In the country, before full mourning is put on, the black cloth is

taken to the *pret' savanne* to be blessed with holy water; in the 765
town the Catholic priest is said to do this. In full mourning,
black is worn on Sundays, Mondays, and Fridays, the days sacred
to the dead, but since full mourning means that one must
be dressed in one's best and it is impossible to wear these
clothes all day long even in the first weeks after death, the rule
is to remain at home, fully dressed, on Sundays, Mondays, and
Fridays, wearing the full mourning outside the house only to
Sunday mass.

When full mourning for a parent cannot be worn immediately 765
following death, the fulfillment of the obligation is postponed. 775
If this duty is not ultimately met, however, the dead 784
take vengeance, so that a child of the one who was remiss perhaps
falls ill, or some other misfortune comes to him. If the
negligent one is no longer living, then the penalty for his neglect [787]
will be assessed on his children, who, on consulting a
diviner, will be told that they must wear mourning not only
for their own parents, but for their grandparents as well. Such
is the case of a dying woman whose story is recounted, for a [755]
diviner ascertained that though she had worn mourning for
her own father, he had not worn it for his parent; as soon as she
put on full mourning for her grandfather, she is said to have
immediately recovered.

A widower wears mourning for a legally married wife for 765
a year, and a widow for her husband during a similar period, 587
and it is believed that if a man were to remarry before the year
has elapsed, his second wife would die, so that a woman will
not go sooner to a widower, while it is equally dangerous for
a widow to take a husband before the first anniversary of the
death of her spouse. Should a *placée* wife die, however, another [583]
may be taken in her stead before the year has passed, for
it is only in matters where the Church is concerned that the
dead take vengeance. Furthermore, a man who has more than [595]
one mate may go to his other wives at any time after the death
of a spouse, and though he would, of course, not go to them

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soon after the death of one for whom he had deep affection, the matter is entirely one which concerns his own feelings. If a woman who cannot afford proper mourning clothes remarries in the Church before she has discharged the obligation to wear mourning for her dead husband, gossip will be heard, but, on the other hand, a woman who has been legally married, and who therefore may not remarry for a year after her husband's death, may be taken as *placée* by another before that period has elapsed. In this case, however, she must wear full mourning and otherwise observe all the necessary rites before the other man with safety may seek the approval of the Church for the union.

76 Though children who have lived until about twelve years of age and have been baptized are given a *dernière prière* and must not be forgotten when sacrifices are made to the family dead, there is but little mourning for them. "*'Ti moun pas gagné deuilles* — Children do not merit the wearing of mourning," it is said, and they are called "*'ti z'anges* — little angels" — for they are too young to have sinned. "It is only when one makes love that the important sins begin." Therefore, if a young person dies, not only do his parents, grandparents, and older brothers and sisters not follow his coffin to the grave, but they do not mourn for him. Only those younger brothers and sisters who were of his age — twelve or thirteen years old — wear semi-mourning.

CHAPTER XII

MAGIC, GOOD AND BAD

In opening any discussion of Haitian magic, the fact must be 789
stressed that magic, though but one of the forces active in the [771]
universe, is a system in itself. As such, it is a thing apart from [794]
the *vodun* cult, a point which must also be emphasized, for
although most writers draw a perfunctory distinction between
magic and *vodun*, this distinction, once stated, is too often
promptly lost sight of.[1] At the same time, the differences be- 789
tween the worship of the *loa* and the practice of magic must 776
not be so juxtaposed as to name the second as the antibody of 771
the first. For, though some of the *loa* can work harm, and some
of them, indeed, are primary forces behind the working of
evil rather than beneficial magic, the good and bad they do is
general in nature. Magic, on the other hand, whether good or [832]
bad, always operates in very specific instances: to cause a given
woman to love a given man, or to make a certain field of a
certain enemy yield poorly.

Yet these distinctions, when drawn, are found in practice to be neither as sharp nor as consistent as the foregoing statements might imply, especially since the system of magic is empowered and validated by many of the *loa*, as well as being closely affiliated with the cult of the dead. The phenomenon dealt with here, and its not illogical contradictions, arise, however, from the fact that the realistic African world view has by

771 776 789 no means given way to that separation of the categories of good and evil that governs much of European thinking. A *loa* that helps a man when friendly toward him may, if slighted or vexed, set about to do him harm, or, at best, merely remain passive when danger is to be averted. For the *loa,* like human beings, are creatures of mood and may take umbrage at some act which had created no displeasure before. Similarly, not all uses of magic are necessarily reprehensible, something at once evident when it is pointed out that much of Haitian folk-medicine derives its psychic force from its magical basis. In short, Haitian belief, of which magic forms a part, does not allow a world view drawn only in blacks and whites. All tones of gray are found, and these merge one into another almost imperceptibly, as the fortunes of a man wax and wane during his lifetime.

771 789 That the Haitian envisages his universe in terms other than those of warring and changeless powers of good and evil should not be taken for a moment to mean that he fails to draw a clear distinction between the benevolent and malevolent forces behind the magic employed in specific instances. This realization is reflected in the terminology he gives the charms that are the outer symbols of these supernatural powers, the *garde, arrêt,* and *drogue* protecting him against harm, the *wanga* being the carrier of dark magic, and the antisocial
776 agent. The actuating forces behind these charms come from all important members of all groups of *loa,* to say nothing of God and the saints of the Church; but the charm itself is a thing which results from the control of these by man himself: "*Wanga, moun qui fait ça* — It is men who make *wangas.*"

789 One other point may here be clarified, since it has made for confusion: namely, the fact that when the Haitian employs the term *magie* he does not mean what the European signifies when using the word "magic." To the student, the vast body of Haitian magico-medical practices, prescribed and administered by both those who know how to manipulate the super-

natural and those whose remedies are based principally on an inherited knowledge of the curative powers of herbs and roots, are all to be gathered under the rubric of magic. For the native, however, a difference of the first order exists between a *traitement* to heal an illness, and magic employed to gain an end, protect from harm, or injure another, even though the same gods be called upon to validate the healing remedies employed to effect cures as are used to actuate a *garde* or a *wanga*. 789

The belief in magic figures importantly even in the early writings on Haiti. Thus St. Mery says: 175 789

> "The Negroes believe in magic and that the power of their fetiches has followed them across the sea. . . . Little rude figures of wood or stone, representing men or animals, are for them things of supernatural power, and they call them *garde-corps*. There are a great number of Negroes who acquire absolute power over the others by this means. . . ."[2]

It is reported that in the early days the black and mulatto concubines of white Haitians often had recourse to reputedly potent charms to insure their attraction for these men and to guard themselves against their white mistresses. One Hyacinthe, a leader in the uprising of 1792, "believed that an ox-tail which he always carried in his hand had the power of preserving him from bullets; he was regarded as invulnerable."[3] And numerous citations could be given to show not only that since that day has the use of charms persisted, but that comment on this use has come to be outstanding in all descriptions of Haitian life.

To understand the various types of practitioners of magic, it is necessary to refer again to the concept that any force habitually actuating evil magic may be directed toward less malevolent ends, while any benevolent supernatural power may exert itself to bring harm. Hence those who make *arrêts* to ward off evil from their clients, or *gardes* to protect them 789

789 from its ill effects after the evil has been exorcised, must also
know the forces they are combating if they are to achieve any
789 measure of success. By the same token, practitioners of black
791 magic must know what steps may be taken to counteract their
793 *wangas* so that, if necessary, they can in turn call forth supernatural
754 emissaries to strengthen the evil impulses originally
756 set in motion. In this sense, therefore, the *hungan*, the *gangan*,
the *bocor*, and the *caplata* employ essentially the same
techniques and operate with the same forces, the difference between
them being one of degree rather than of kind. "*Hungan, c'est magazin. Gaigné un pile marchandise* — The *hungan*
[538] is like a shop. He has a lot of merchandise" says the
Haitian, quoting a well-known proverb as he makes the point.

In the main, it can be said that though the *hungan* and the
gangan practice magic, their main preoccupation is with the
loa — the maladies they send to affect a man and his possessions
— while the *bocor* is concerned almost exclusively with
setting in motion the agents that actuate black magic, and the
789 *caplata* dabbles in anything that is wanted. One important
776 means whereby the sorcerer obtains his powers is the evil *loa*,
791 but there is this essential difference between them: the gods
793 of the *hungan* are family gods who come to him through the
754 natural course of inheritance, endowing him with the *connaissance*
474 that gives him his control over the supernatural world,
425 while the *bocor* buys his gods. And when a god is bought, it
is always acquired so as to enhance the position of its owner at
all costs, despite the knowledge that the power thus purchased
is dearly bought, bringing its own eventual punishment.
Sometimes an ambitious *hungan* adds to his familial *loa* other
"purchased" gods, but this is resented by the deities who have
given him his powers, so that in time these benevolent powers
take all means to humble and crush him. Furthermore, gods
acquired in this way pass on to unwilling members of their
owner's family and, after a generation or two of mischief-
000 making, must be "restrained" or "banished." A number of

points — or oblique designations — makes a number of clear the distinc- 789
tion between the two, for the *bocor* invariably and certain 793
hungans on occasion are called *nèg' mazi maza,* "Negro who 754
wears his back to the front," or, again, those who "serve with 791
both hands." Though by no means shunning the services of the practitioner, the Haitians of Mirebalais nevertheless look upon the working of magic with a cynicism that is reflected in the gossip about happenings that befall all who practice it, in any form, and particularly those who work evil magic. It is said: "The *hungan* often dies an evil death, and the *bocor* who makes *wanga* almost always. These people kill each other by magic"; or one hears of a woman who one day went to the cemetery to obtain materials needed for her unsavory work and was struck and killed by the thunderbolts which are believed to smite sorcerers.

To keep his reputation, a practitioner of magic, good or 789
evil, must make continual demonstration of his powers. For 756
example, in prescribing a magical cure, it is incumbent upon 793
the *hungan* or *mambu* to foresee all eventualities, even where the directions are not followed, a prescription which is regarded as a strong check on the charlatan and is the reason why a practitioner is prudent in refusing to accept a case beyond his power to aid, since persistent failure to achieve cures will lose a *hungan* his reputation and his practice. Naturally, certain practitioners do not fail on occasion to turn the anxiety of a family over a serious illness to their own account, but inasmuch as the cures made by a man are the most adequate proof of his power, the feeling is that his clients have an unquestioned safeguard against chicanery. This point of view, it may be noted, is of undoubted importance in perpetuating a living faith in magic.

An example of how rapidly a practitioner of magic can lose 558
prestige when some mishap occurs to him was encountered 793
when an important *gangan* of the valley was brought into 685
court charged with the theft of a pig which he claimed was

558 given him by a third party for whom he had done what was
793 euphemistically called "a piece of work." The evidence
685 clearly showed that the animal, which he had killed to feed a *combite*, had been stolen, and since this *gangan* could not establish his defense that he was an innocent receiver of stolen goods, he was convicted and sentenced to three months in prison, and to pay the owner of the pig the exorbitant sum — sixty-five gourdes — asked as damages. Sympathy was very generally with the *gangan*, but the opinion most often heard expressed was that his power had obviously been lessened by his misuse of the *connaissance* the gods had given him, or they would not have permitted even his arrest, much less his conviction. To reinforce the point, specific reference was repeatedly made to the *hungan* most popular in the valley at the time, about whom it was said that, for example, were he accused before a court, the officers might even enter his house in search of him while he was present, but they would still be unable to see that he was before them.

793 Other attitudes held toward workers of magic developed in
435 connection with this case. The popular *hungan* was often
554 called on, it was said, because his work was well done and his fees were not too high; it was pointed out that there were renowned *vodun* priests who charged five hundred gourdes for a *service* which this man directed effectively for but little over one hundred; moreover, such men often failed to remove the evil deities which were troubling the family that employed them, but would instead add more, so that their clients would
793 soon have need of them again. Practices such as these, espe-
435 cially that of overcharging, are frowned upon by the *loa*, and
776 if persisted in they "spoil" the power of the priest. This was
984 one of the reasons why, in the opinion of many individuals, the *gangan* in question had been convicted. "He was once a remarkable *gangan*, but he has spoiled his *loa* by using them for evil, and by asking too much money for what he was employed

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to do. The *loa* would come, but they wouldn't give him the same *connaissance*."

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One of the most important of the forces behind all magic is the *Mait' Carrefour*, the Master of the Crossroads. The possible identity of this *loa* with Legba, who guards the entrance to houses and is also thought of as a guardian of the highways, was a question that could not be satisfactorily resolved, though it seems most likely that the two are quite distinct, since Legba is but rarely called upon when magic is being performed. One Haitian versed in magic stated:

> "The *Mait' Carrefour* is like the president. Legba is like a minister. God sent the *Mait' Carrefour*. He commands Baron Samedi. Before going to the cemetery to perform [black] magic you must pass the crossroads, and therefore he is able to restrain you if he is not properly worshipped. He commands Damballa. He commands the Rada and Pétro gods. He commands all the saints because all of these must pass the crossroads. Therefore when one has a *garde carrefour*, a person will die a death sent by God [that is, a natural death] and not one caused by *magie* or the *mystères*."

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The *Mait' Carrefour* must be "paid" each year on All Saints' Day, when seven cents in copper coins are given and a white chicken is killed, cooked, and placed in a wooden container with rice, biscuits, cassava, potatoes, bananas, and other kinds of food, both cooked and uncooked, to be deposited at a crossroad with the statement: "Here is food; thank you for having cared for me. If evil *loa* wish to harm me, *Mait' Carrefour*, restrain them." As this is said, a candle is lighted and an invocation pronounced:

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> ***"Au nom de Mait' Carrefou'; au nom de Mait' Grand Bois; au nom de Baron Cimitière! Jodia, premier la***

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[539] *Toussaint, voici un couvert moin porté ba ou. Ou gardé vot' enfant, comme vot' père et vot' mère dans la maison.* — In the name of the Master of the Crossroads; in the name of the Master of the Great Forest; in the name of Baron Cemetery! Today, the first of All Saints' Day, here are offerings I bring you. Guard your child as your father and your mother in the house."

[788] *Clairin* is thrown three times at each fork of the crossroads, and some is also sprinkled in the center and at each corner of the container of food. Three bits of earth are finally lifted from the corners of the crossroads and taken to the home of the worshipper. Here they are put in a plate with *clairin,* which is first lighted and then extinguished, so that the members of the family can anoint themselves with it and receive strength with which to face the new year.

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821 Good magic has many expressions. Thus there is said to be secret knowledge, transmitted in certain families from generation to generation, of how to control the rains. Those who have control of magic of this sort are to be recognized when they are seen to be completely dry while walking in a downpour. Generally such powers are used to insure a rainless day for a *combite* or *service,* or to cause rain to fall the day after a *combite* has made the field ready for hoeing, or when the proper time for planting is at hand. Eventually, it is said, in response to a temptation too great to be resisted, the possessor [784] of such magic will put it to other, evil ends. Then sooner or later the punishment for this abuse of his knowledge is visited upon him, so that in the end he meets his death by being struck by the avenging lightning.

789 The most powerful type of protective magic is known as a *drogue.* One of the most potent of these — of the type referred to by Léger in commenting on the ox-tail carried by Hyacinthe, or such a one as tradition holds Christophe possessed, which gave him immunity from all but silver bullets — makes

it possible for the owner to go to war without being harmed. 789
Even were the possessor of such a *drogue* to be struck by a bullet, the wound would be a minor one; while the thrust of a machete or saber would leave him unscathed, poison placed in drink or food would be impotent, and a trap set against the warrior would be ineffective. Some *drogues*, it is held, allow the owner to disappear when trapped by enemies. For such an [784]
important *drogue* a special day, designated by its maker, is [834]
set aside for the observance of certain taboos, the most important being the requirement of sexual abstinence on that day.[4] Some men possess as many as seven of these *drogues*, in which case one day every seventh week is reserved for each. Said a man who had taken part in the rebellion of 1918–20 against the Marine occupation: " I have a small, small *drogue*. I had it in the Caco fighting. I have need of a big one." When it was observed that there is no more fighting in Haiti, the reply came promptly: " A man must be prepared. Nobody knows what will come."

The grandfather of this man was said by him to have owned 789
a *drogue* which came from Guinée. He knew how to resusci- 754
tate those who had met their death from unnatural — magical — causes; he had only to come to the *barrière* before the house where the body lay, call the name of the victim, and the dead would arise. He was once attacked when he was returning home with a purse filled with money he had won at cards, and his assailants beat him to death and threw him into a well. The next morning, when he was found, he revived in a few moments and asked to be buried beside the well. The following day one of the men who had assaulted him died; the next day another died, and so for five days, until all of them were dead.

Love-charms form an important category of good magic, as 832
also charms to aid in selling in the markets or in keeping a job or to hold the affection of a spouse. Old men are believed 789
to have important magical powers for good, and one such 888

789 [888] person of great experience was pointed out who was believed able to stop a runaway horse without putting a finger on him. One widely spread type of charm is an *arrêt* against the *mal jòk,* or evil eye. Mention has been made of protective charms when the measures taken to guard growing crops were discussed, and also in connection with safeguarding the well-being of infants. The power in this latter type of *garde* often is made to reside in a seed on a string or chain, or a cross of beads sewed on cloth, to represent the four corners of the earth.

789 793 Because charms are the outer symbols of magic, detailed examples of their making will give insight into the nature of [829] [787] [954] charms in general. The first of these which may be described was a *garde,* made by a *mambu,* to relieve a pregnant woman whose milk had begun to flow before the birth of her child — a sign that an evil spirit had been sent her by an enemy, and that her delivery would therefore be fraught with danger. [787] During the séance the *mambu* was continuously possessed by her god, Ogun, whose identity was shown by her whistling. Before the *mambu* as she commenced her incantation were some *clairin,* lighted red candles, a new piece of soap, incense, sulphur, garlic, light brown shoemaker's thread, an empty bottle, a bottle filled with a green, evil-smelling lotion called *baigne de mambu,* a chick, and three iron nails. As she tied the cord in knots she muttered her spell; then, taking the empty bottle, she put in it a bit of the incense, sulphur, garlic, some soap, some *clairin,* and some *baigne de mambu.* With the knotted cord she tied a cross made of two nails to the neck of the bottle, repeating her formula before she put it down. Instructing the pregnant woman to take the bottle, she said: "Speak into it and say everything you wish."

[825] She then took the chick, opened its beak, and wrote on it with a pencil, continuing the incantation the while. With the pencil she also made marks on the thighs, the wings, the upper joints, and the leg joints before she handed it to her client

with the words: "Tell it what you have to say. Tell it that you 789 are passing on to it all your pain, everything." When she had 793 finished, the *mambu* once again took the chick, holding its 825 head as she described three crosses on the ground with its beak. She now put some of the earth in which she had made the crosses into a white dish, returning the chick to the woman and telling her to speak to it again, and this time to expectorate three times into its open beak as she finished. The 789 *mambu*, holding the fowl in one hand, thereupon poured 793 some of the mixture from the bottle, and some *clairin*, in the plate that contained the earth, lighting the *clairin* with her free hand and directing the patient to rub her nipples with it. Then she returned the bottle to the pregnant woman, telling her to recount her need to it once more, and then to cork it.

The *mambu* next chewed some of the soap and rubbed it over the cork to "seal" the bottle, saying: "When you send a letter through the mail, you seal it," and instructed the pregnant woman to place the bottle in her house and see to it that it was not uncorked, for in it was contained her life and the life of her child. "Open it before delivery and pass its contents over your abdomen." A cord was put about the waist of the woman and tied tightly, not to be untied until the growing child in her womb should cause it to break of itself. While [533] the *garde* was being made the *mambu* sang this song: [539]

M' pas 'ti bête,	I am not a little animal,
M' pas 'ti cochon,	I am not a little pig,
Pou' on covê,	That one can confine me,
Pou' on marré moin.	That one can tie me up.
Ça qui fait bien,	He who does good,
Cé bien li wè;	Good he will see;
Ça qui fait mal,	He who does evil,
Cé mal li wè.	Evil he will see.
Côté marré corde moin,	Where I tie my cord,
Yo passa la qui li.	They are stronger than it [the evil?].

789 825 The chick was released in the open countryside. Were a person to capture and eat it, the evil that had been transferred to the fowl would come to him. Many such fowl live wild in the woods, and no one touches them.

789 There was no hesitation in permitting spectators to witness the making of this charm; rather it was held to be good business to allow anything pertaining to a cure to become widely known. Had the transaction involved evil magic, great secrecy would have been exacted of the principals, and no others would have been present. The operation of sympathetic magic in this case — the fact that the ingredients were either cleansing or evil-smelling, for example, indicates the concept behind the charm. Similarly, the assertion that the [825] chick which figured so prominently in the rite would carry away the *wanga* sent against the pregnant woman shows how the forces of "white" magic are manipulated to combat "black."

Another *garde* had for its purpose the protection of its owner against evil, and, being a *garde Mait' Carrefour,* was especially designed to enable him to go about unharmed at night. Though carefully made, it was not actuated by its power at the end of the séance, nor were extraordinary demands made of it and reciprocal promises of rewards for gratifying them, since it was then explained that it was desired as an example rather than an actively potent charm which, because of the difficulties of properly serving it away from Haiti, might cause its possessor harm. To make this charm the following ingredients were furnished:

One half-ell of red cotton
A bottle of *kola*
Clairin
Cakes
Cassava bread
Roasted maize
Seven "red" copper sous
A candle
A spool of black thread
Some ashes

In addition, the maker of the charm brought a candle with 789 him, and, more importantly, earth from the four corners of a crossroad.

All shutters and doors of the house where the ritual was performed were closed and barred so that no passer-by might report the performance to the authorities, inasmuch as the practice of magic in any form is severely punished and the house was in the town itself. This constituted a departure from the usual practice, for in ordinary cases the rite would have been carried out at a crossroad in the countryside, where chances of detection would be slight.

The maker of the charm began by kneading the earth he had taken from a crossroad into the form of a small pear, about the size of a child's fist. Then taking seven plus seven measures of thread, he first burned the ends and then passed the resulting bundle of fourteen strands repeatedly over one of the native beeswax candles, twisting and doubling it so that it made a length of substantial cord. When completed, he put it to one side and made another like it, saying as he did so: [539]

Au nom de St. Garde,	In the name of St. Garde,
Aujourd'hui, Lundi, nous cordé votre garde.	Today, Monday, we twine your *garde.*
Au nom de Mait' Carrefu',	In the name of the Master of the Crossroads,
Au nom de prière garde,	In the name of the prayer of charms,
Au nom Marie Shango,	In the name of Marie Shango,
Au nom de Gran' Malolu,	In the name of Gran' Malolu,
Qui marche accompagné Mait' Calfu'.	Who goes together with the Master of the Crossroads.

The purpose of this invocation was to summon both the Master of the Crossroads and his wife, Malolu, and the name of [776]

789 [776] the *loa* was pronounced as the cord was actually finished. *Clairin* was then poured in three places on the threshold and drunk by all present.

Seated on a mat, the dealer in magic next placed the molded earth near by and put a dish of cassava bread, cake, and corn and a bottle of *kola* beside it, with the seven coppers and the red cotton, while he placed a candle on an empty white plate and lighted it. From his pocket he took a thick white candle of his own, and a razor, with which he cut it into three pieces. 789 539 He then removed his shoes. After two pieces of the candle had been placed upright against the plate, the red cloth was torn in half and one portion of it, folded once, was laid on the white plate, the molded earth being set down in the center of this piece of cloth with the thread near by, as the officiant intoned:

Au nom Dieu de Tè'	In the name of the God of the Earth,
Au nom Dieu dit Fils,	In the name of God called the Son,
Au nom Dieu du Cièl,	In the name of God of the Sky,
Au nom de Ste. Vierge,	In the name of the Holy Virgin,
Au nom de St. Louis,	In the name of St. Louis.[*]
Au nom de Vierge de Ca'mel,	In the name of the Virgin of Carmel,
Voici poin' garde	Here is a *point garde*
Qui pr' allé marré ce soir, Lundi.	Which I am tying this evening, Monday.

He thereupon poured *clairin* on the four corners of the cloth and on the earth, " since the soul of Maît' Carrefour is in the earth."

Taking up the red cloth with the earth in it, he tied it with

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[*] The patron saint of Mirebalais.

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the cord once over the center, and then at right angles so as to form a cross, crying: "*A-i bobo!*" To hold the cloth in place, he continued to pass the thread about the ball of earth again and again, though according to no special design after the first right angle had been made. As he did this, he sang: [533)

Garde la monté.	This *garde* is fashioned.
Dié nou e-e na coffré yo-o	O God, close them-o.
Moin dit garde la monté.	I say this *garde* is fashioned.
Dié nou e-e na coffré yo-o	O God, close them.
Garde-e, na coffré yo.	*Garde-e,* close them.
Calefou', cé nou minmé,	Crossroads, it is we who are here,
Nou Pemba pa joué.	Pemba, do not play.
Ça nou minmé.	It is we who are here.
Loa Pemba, joué na joué,	*Loa Pemba,* playing he plays,
Magie loa,	*Loa* of magic,
Magie Calfou',	Magic of the Crossroads,
Ça nou minmé.	It is we who are here.

His singing was interrupted by this invocation:

Au nom de Dieu,	In the name of God,
Au nom de Sainte Vierge,	In the name of the Holy Virgin,
Au nom de St. Louis,	In the name of St. Louis,
Au nom de Marassa,	In the name of the Twins,
Voici poin' garde pou' épargné malin esprits marché dans la nuit.	Here is a charm to foil the evil spirits who walk by night.
Au nom de Saints du Ciél,	In the name of the Saints of the Sky,
Au nom de Saints de Tè',	In the name of the Saints of the Earth,

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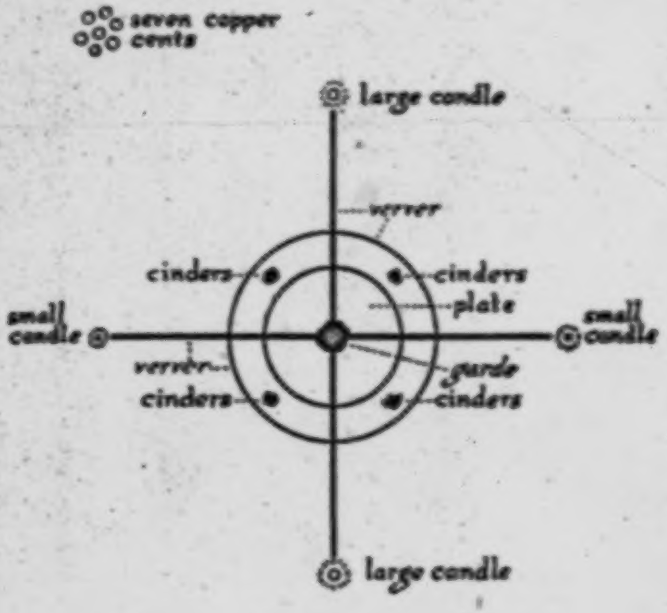
Au nom de Saints de la Lune,	In the name of the Saints of the Moon,
Au nom de Saints des Étoiles,	In the name of the Saints of the Stars,
Au nom de Saint de Vent,	In the name of the Saint of the Wind,
Au nom de Saint de Tempête,	In the name of the Saint of the Tempest,
Voici yun garde protection pou' marché dans la nuit,	See, here is a *garde* which gives protection as one walks at night,
Pou' Malt' Calefu'.	For the Master of the Crossroads.

[533] The entwining of the *garde* ended with this song:

Zoumba-é, ai papa, ai manman,	*Zumba-é, ai* father, *ai* mother,
Calefu' barré yo,	The Crossroads bars them,
Cimitière barré yo,	The Cemetery bars them,
Moin monté garde moin,	I fashion my *garde,*
Ai manman, ai papa,	*Ai* mother, *ai* father,
Zoumba-é-é.	*Zumba-é-é.*

789 With the specially treated earth from the crossroads now safely enclosed in its red cotton, the officiant placed it in a white plate and made *verver* about it, using cinders which are termed *farine Guinée,* "the flour of Guinea," and lighted two bits of red candle. The *verver* circled the plate, and also described two long straight lines which crossed at right angles at the center of the circle, each being terminated by a candle — two large and two small. On the floor, near one of the large candles, the seven coppers were placed, and four small piles of cinders were heaped inside the circle, in the following manner:


seven copper cents
large candle
verver
cinders
cinders
plate
small candle
small candle
verver
garde
cinders
cinders
large candle

Clairin was sprayed from the mouth of the maker to sprinkle the *garde*, and then another lighted candle was passed four times around the circumference of the plate, this being repeated with the two larger candles on the floor. The food was piled in the plate, and on it the coppers and the *garde* were set, after which, as flame leaped from one wick to another, the sorcerer passed the fire from candle to candle, making circular movements with each as he did so. Taking the other half of the red cloth, he removed the small candles, and changed the large one from 8 to o o, placing the bottles where the candles had stood, while he intoned: "I serve *Mait' Carrefour*, and I take the responsibility on myself for

789 making this *garde*. I have not obligated anyone else in any way."

789 539 He now poured *clairin* on the plate, lighted it, and stepped five times over the fire, twice turning the *garde* about in the flame, rubbing his face, hands, and head with the burning liquid, as he pronounced the following invocation:

Au nom de Malt' Grand Bois,	In the name of the Master of the Great Forest,
Qui soldat Malt' Carrefour,	Who is a soldier of the Master of the Crossroads,
Au nom Malt' Cimitière,	In the name of Malolu, of the Cemetery,
Au nom de Malolu,	In the name of Malolu,
Au nom de Kadia-Bosu,	In the name of Kadia-Bosu,
Qui soldat Malt' Carrefour nan toute pays,	Who is the soldier of the Master of the Crossroads in all countries,
Voici un couvert qui preparé ce soir pou' 'ou.	Here is an offering prepared this evening for you.

Extinguishing the *clairin*, he relighted it and repeated what he had just done as another Haitian, a spectator, commented: "If it were not a good *garde*, he would be burned." Finally [533] he sang the following song, which ended this part of the ceremony:

Garde la wé magie carrefou',	This *garde* sees the magic of the Crossroads,
Moin pralé sond'é point.	I am going to test a charm.
Magie cimitière,	Magic of the cemetery,
Moin pralé sond'é point.	I am going to test a charm.

789 The officiant, gathering up the food, the plate, the candles, and the remaining half of the red cloth, prepared to go to

the crossroads, where he alone would have to conduct the brief rite that was necessary to complete the making of this *garde*. As he arrived at his destination — this portion of the description is his — the plate was put down with the *kola* beside it, and *clairin* was poured on the ground. The lighted candles were placed near by, and with arms outstretched, he spoke the following formula: 789 [539]

Au nom de Mait' Carrefour,	In the name of the Master of the Crossroads,
Voici un couvert sec deposé jodi-a, Lundi.	Here is an offering placed today, Monday.
Au nom de Mait' Gran' Bra,	In the name of the Master of the Great Forest,
Ce couvert est pou' vous.	This offering is for you.
Mait' Carrefou', pour garde moin, sorti pou' 'ou.	Master of the Crossroads, for [the sake of] my charm, which comes from you.
Moin mandé pou' gardé	I ask that you protect me
Nan tout ces moin capab' trouvé moin	In all I may encounter
Pou' bien, nan pou' mal.	Of good, and of evil.

Before leaving the crossroads, the maker of the *garde* touched the plate and bottles three times to earth, calling the names of Master of the Crossroads, Master of the Great Forest, and Master of the Cemetery. [788]

While the nature and forms of good magic that have been thus far discussed show a characteristic African pattern, the presence of the factor of medieval European magic is evident, though this is not as sharply identifiable here as in the functioning of the less pleasant aspects of these supernatural powers. That this merging of two traditions is fundamental in all Haitian magical practice must nevertheless be patent to all who have had experience with it, unless in their intentness on 789 177

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esoteric African survivals they have been blinded to the European elements.[5] It was, as a matter of fact, well-nigh impossible to discuss magic, whether good or evil, with a native for any length of time without hearing the names of three pamphlets published in Paris, *Le Grand Albert*, *Le Petit Albert*, and *La Poule Noire*. So portentous do the folk of Mirebalais hold the information contained in these works — though actually, when read, their contents are found to include nothing more dangerous than names of the proper roots and herbs with which to concoct a love-potion, or, far more frequently, magic for preventing wine from turning to vinegar, or for enabling one to gentle a wild colt — that their importation into Haiti is said to be prohibited by law, a statement which was not checked except in so far as inquiries for the pamphlets in Port-au-Prince bookstores proved in vain. The contents of these works on magic differ but little from those of a document written in Créole, said by Seabrook, who reprinted it, to have come from the files of the Marine Corps, where it was deposited after having been taken during the rebellion of 1918–20 from the body of a fallen Caco chief known to have been a *bocor*.[6] The source of inspiration of a large number of these formulas and of many of their objectives is obviously in such European pamphlets.[7]

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Turning now from the more passive, protective, and socially desirable forms of magic, a similar analysis may be made of its aggressive, destructive, and antisocial manifestations. That magic of this latter sort is much feared is a truism; yet that the fear of it goes as far or is as constant as most accounts of its workings state may be marked as gross exaggeration. For just as the practitioner of good magic knows how to bring about evil, so for every force that harms there is a cure, and for every *wanga* there is a *garde*.

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The malignant powers in the world of the Haitian are, like other phases of his life, of both European and African derivation. From Europe he has taken the *démon* and the associated

term *loup-garou*, or werewolf. From Africa has come the concept 754
of the *baka*, though this he has merged with that of the 776
démon, and all operate through the power of Lucifer and the 177
Devil, conceived as two separate beings. In addition, as will be
seen, the cult of the dead also contributes to this system, since [775]
the *loa* who rule the cemeteries are indispensable for the practice
of magic, as it bears especially on the concept of *zombi*,
concerning which so much has been made in recent years.

The evil *loups-garous* are women whose real nature is revealed [826]
by their red eyes, though some hold that they have a
black spot in the corner of the eye. Another word less frequently
heard to designate the *loup-garou* is the Dahomean
term *azeto*, employed in Africa for witches and vampires, a
concept which in Haiti has become merged with that of the
werewolf.[8] The *loup-garou*, with her male counterpart, the
démon, is empowered by the *bocor*. As might be expected, she
is greatly feared, and should an old woman suspected of being 789
one of them come to a house, someone will see to it that in an 754
adjoining room two brooms are crossed as the woman's name 776
is pronounced three times, so that if she is actually a *loup-garou*,
she cannot escape.[9] Children in particular carry
counter-charms both against these women and against demons;
one such, for a woman with child, has been mentioned
in an earlier chapter,[10] and the making of another *garde* of this
type has just been described. With a charm of this kind "you
can leave at midnight for Port-au-Prince [instead of waiting
for dawn] and fear nothing. You may meet a band of horned
demons carrying candles in their hands, but they will stand
aside and let you pass."

In Mirebalais, *baka* are usually mentioned when these evil 776
beings are discussed, particularly since it is in connection with 787
them that the term *engagement* is most often heard. An *engagement*, 754
which is more feared than a *wanga*, the word usually
encountered in the literature when evil magic is under
discussion, designates a pledge made by a person, usually to

776 " give " a collateral member of his own family to an evil spirit
787 in return for some important gain to himself. The spirit, how-
754 ever, is insatiable, and never rests content with a single victim. Thus it happens that when one member of a family dies and then another, and another, the *hungans* who are consulted declare such an *engagement* to exist. As soon as this is revealed, all other members take steps to safeguard their houses spiritually — perhaps in the manner of those whose *service* was described in an earlier chapter, which, it will be remembered, was motivated by just such a discovery. Unfailingly, however, the *baka* is there at the appointed hour, clamoring for his due, and proceeds to satisfy himself by turning upon the one who has made the *engagement,* killing his own wife and children, and finally himself.

Why, knowing this, do people enter into such compacts? The answer is usually a shrug of the shoulders, or the statement that human beings are at times driven to such desperation that nothing will restrain them. " A man may even pledge half his own life." Often the reason for such a compact is a craving to advance the status of his children, and that is why when a man who has been consistently unfortunate in worldly matters suddenly becomes affluent, gossip of an *engagement* is heard. But such wealth, it is believed, " passes like the wind."

There are several types of *baka.*[11] Some go about " devouring " men — the term *mangé moun,* in Haiti as in Africa, is idiomatic for sending fatal illness or bringing about an accidental death — while others, who stay in the house of their master, go forth only to procure him riches. These latter are jealous spirits and " make their conditions " — which means that they will ultimately destroy the members of their master's family, particularly his children, or, should a man repent of his bargain and dismiss them, they will return to kill him. To bring wealth to their master, they rob others. Some believe that *baka* are *loa* who change into these creatures from time to time, or are animals given power as *baka* by these *loa*. The "squad" of the *baka* includes the following: 776 787 754

'Ti Kita Demembré
'Ti Jean Pié Sèche
Erzilie Gé Rouge
Simbi Proméné
Simbi en Deux Eaux
Simbi Troi' Z'ilé

Baka appear as small bearded human-like figures with flaming eyes, or as cattle, horses, asses, goats, bears(?), and dogs. Sheep never become *baka* because the sheep, as represented on the chromolithographs, is the animal of the Virgin and therefore cannot be a creature of evil. The mule also is never a *baka* for reasons given in the myth explaining how it came to be accursed. 776 825

[773]

> One day Jesus came down a path astride a mule. When he came to a crossroads a snake so frightened the mule that he reared on his hind legs, throwing Jesus to the ground. Jesus became angry and cursed him, saying that from that day onward mules would never bear offspring. He also cursed the snake, saying that thereafter it must forever go about on its belly.

Whether because of this or because of its long, alert ears, the mule is favored for night travel, for this animal is held able to sense these creatures of evil and give his rider warning of them. A black cat can become a *baka*, but there are also good black cats that drive away evil spirits. Even if a black cat-*baka* is sent away, nothing happens to its owner.

A *baka* named Babako, sometimes called Bakuba Baka, is believed to live in the *mapou* tree, where he is "fed" in December. "He is the chief of [evil] magic, is magic itself," it is said, and "*C'est baggai diabolique, gros baka*—he is a thing of the Devil, a great *baka*." For this reason the *mapou* tree is greatly feared, and that is why those who "serve" the gods of the *mapou* do it in secret and are dealt with circumspectly. 776 824

754 Some *baka* are believed to be " doubles " of sorcerers who take
776 animal form and roam at night doing evil. Pigs encountered
825 at night are especially dreaded because of this, and those of a
gray color, held to be more potent for evil than those of any
other shade, are sedulously avoided. The tale is told of a man
who, having encountered a gray pig at midnight which passed
between his legs at great speed, was ill for months afterwards.
It is also recounted how several men of uncommon bravery
waited for one such pig and beat it, and how the next morning
an old woman was found on whose bent back wounds inflicted
776 by sticks could be seen. It is because of stories such as this that
it is held important to worship the good *loa*. For if the devotee
of a *loa* meets a *baka* at night, the *loa* comes to his head and the
baka flees in terror. An autobiographical incident was related
to make this point. When a lad, the man who told the tale
joined his playmates in an escapade which had as its aim to
frighten some young women returning home late from a
vodun dance. Draped in white sheets they stationed themselves
near a bridge, turning about before lighted candles in
the ground. The young women were possessed by their *loa* the
instant they caught sight of these apparitions, who promptly
fled the scene to avoid capture by those who came running in
reply to the songs and cries emitted by the protecting gods!

776 *Baka* are often employed to guard buried money. " In this
454 country, when you find money buried in jars, it is an affair of
baka. There is never one jar, but always two or three, and you
must call a *hungan* to find out which one you may take and
which you must not touch. Generally the finder is allowed to
take half of the treasure, for if he took all, he would be tormented
by the *baka* who had been left as guardian." Such jars,
it is said, are usually found with human bones beside them or
under them, and tradition has it that the slave-owners who are
believed to have been strong in magic customarily killed the
most evil slave on a plantation that his spirit might keep watch
over the jars. If the owner never returned, the spirit of the

slave, as a "sold *baka*," remained to wreak vengeance upon 776
anyone who dared disturb his charge. 454

The reality of the *baka* to the Haitian was made dramati- 776
cally vivid by an incident involving an old blind and deaf 825
horse. It occurred one night on the principal streets of the town of Mirebalais itself. The horse was first noticed as the sun set, groping his way along, and finally circling the turn of the road. Though people shouted at the animal, he would not give way. As darkness came and doors and windows were barred, the horse blundered into the small veranda of a house inhabited by an elderly woman, her daughter, and her grandchildren. The younger woman cried out with fright when, timidly peering about the side of the house, she saw their visitor, but the older woman, whose age made her fearless in the face of this supernatural danger, opened a window and vigorously attacked the animal with a heavy stick, while he unhurriedly tried to get clear of the blows and finally moved on to the next veranda, and so from house to house down the street. On this night the habitual tranquillity did not settle over the town, and all of the next day and many days thereafter there was quiet talk of the danger that had been abroad, and much speculation of its intended destination.

The *baka* are sometimes confused with the *démons*, as is 754
seen in the fragmentary information that was obtained about 776
the existence of secret societies, so feared by Mirebalais folk 575
because of their reputation for working all kinds of evil that it was with difficulty that even the names of two of them could be learned — the "Bissago," whose members appear at night wearing horns and holding candles, and "Les Cochons sans Poils." The former, termed *démons*, are believed to be able to change into animals when they do their evil work, a feat which would seem to make them *baka*. The societies all meet
in the open country at night, and each has a small drum. They [202]
are called together by the beating of one rock against another
in a manner reminiscent of the Zangbeto society of Porto [171]
Novo, Dahomey.

754 776 575 Novo, Dahomey. The members are, of course, not known, but there is always gossip, and occasionally a man, when quarreling, says: "Take care! You don't know who I am. . . ."

776 *Baka, loups-garous,* and *démons* are not the only supernatural beings that a person may encounter from time to time. Though not all are creatures of magic, and not all are evil, all of them are treated with due caution. Such are the "river [793] people" — children with six fingers, who are believed to belong to the Maît' Source, the Master of the Stream, and are destined to become *hungans* — this being an example of the good that may come from such supernatural association — or persons with light hair. Those with light hair are more dangerous, however, since occasionally such folk are taken for a time under the water, the men by female spirits and the women by males. One person in Mirebalais told of a distant cousin who disappeared as she went to the river to draw water. She was mourned as dead, but returned after a year and was welcomed home. As she began to recount her adventures, however, she was struck dumb, and never recovered her speech. Another spoke of his experience as a boy with such a water-spirit, a *Maîtresse d'Eaux.* With a companion, he was walking along the bank of the Tombe River, when a woman was seen sitting on a rock combing her long light-colored hair. The other lad was invited to help her and went nearer, step by step, until, as he almost touched the comb, he turned and ran. Some time later he died.

754 764 775 Another category of spirits, already referred to in discussing the cult of the dead, are *zombi.* To understand their nature, however, the use of magic to bring about death or its simulacre, and the measures taken to guard against this, must be first considered. In the preceding chapter it was observed how *hoholi* seeds are placed in the coffin of one suspected of an "unnatural" death to prevent the sorcerer from reaping the [789] fruits of his deed. A cross of pine-wood, made by the *hungan* and empowered by him to repel evil, is frequently also put

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

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ABOVE, *At a* vodun *dance: those possessed whirling about the central post.*
BELOW, *Making the* vodun *drum: describing the sign of the cross with lighted candles over the unheaded bodies.*

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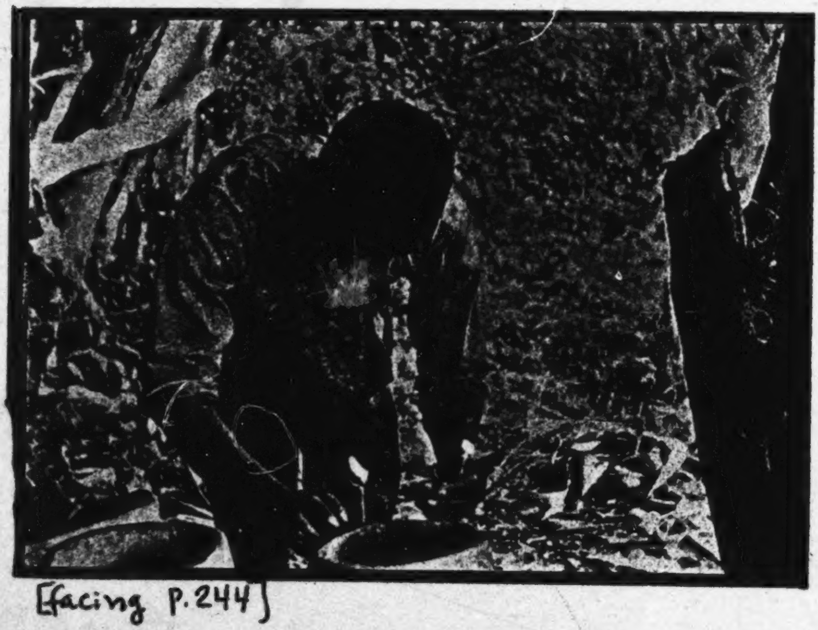

[facing p.244]

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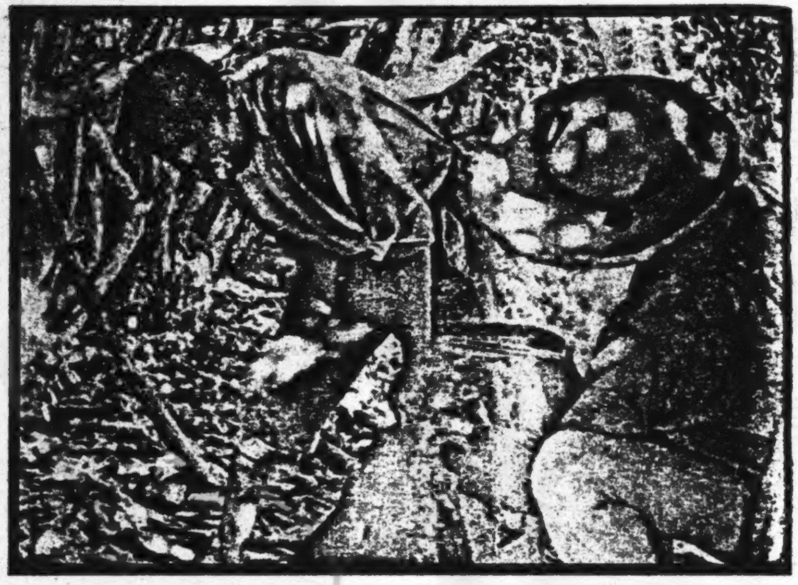

ABOVE, *Making the* vodun *drum: stretching the cow-hide heads.*

BELOW, *Consecrating the drums: they must be "dressed," like anyone who is baptized.*

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[facing p. 245]

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with it, or the body is made to lie face downwards in the coffin, 764
since the discomfort of this position causes the spirit of the 775
dead to avenge itself on the sorcerer who caused the death. [789]
When a man has been killed by magic, his surviving relatives 754
go to a *hungan* or a *bocor* to discover the culprit. The names of 787
those suspected of the deed are called. Before the diviner stands a pottery jar filled with magically treated water. When the unwilling image of the guilty one finally appears, the *hungan* plunges his knife into it, and as the water turns red, those watching know that when the specified number of days have passed, the guilty one will be dead.[12] Should a suspect be innocent, the image of the Virgin Mary or of St. John is sometimes seen when he is called; but if one known to be guilty does not appear, it is proof that his magic is stronger than that used to call him. Recourse is then had to a powerful *wanga*, or poison,
or to the spirit of someone dead, an *âme abandonée* who has [775]
led a life of evil and himself been a murderer. "They would certainly not send the spirit of the one just killed. He is too green" — to bring death to the killer. If none of these measures prevail, no further acts of revenge are attempted against the suspect, the feeling being that he has supplied himself with too powerful magic to allow effective revenge to be taken.

On occasion, an apparent death is felt not to be a real death, 754
but rather the simulacre of death brought about by the mach- 761
ination of a sorcerer. The corpse is thereupon given poison 764
or stabbed with a dagger, to make certain that an apparent 775
death becomes an actual one, but the person who stabs the body must stand behind it in order that the corpse as slave of the sorcerer may not reveal who had stabbed him when summoned, and thus make of the one who had robbed him of his
prey a substitute victim. If poison has not been administered [263]
to the corpse, or if the body was not stabbed, after the funeral the sorcerer recovers the body, which, deprived of its soul, works for him as a *zombi*, only returning to the grave when the time decreed by God for his natural death is reached, or if
he is accidentally fed salt.

000 754 he is accidentally fed salt. Though the concept has been pre-
775 sented in recent years with unjustifiable sensationalism to the
reading public,[13] it is indisputably a living one. One aspect of
775 it has been responsible for much of the conviction with which
754 positive statements are made of personal knowledge of can-
266 nibalism in Haiti, as has been shown most clearly by Dr.
114 Parsons:

> [793] "A *ganga* who keeps a *zombi* may transform him into a stone, perhaps in front of his house, or into any kind of animal. Transforming him into a pig or sheep or cow, he may kill him and sell him in the market. In this belief we have the basis of the gossip and court testimony about human flesh sold in the market. It is *zombi* flesh, not human flesh, that is so disposed of. But foreigners know nothing about *zombi*, nor do the native witnesses explain in court what they have in mind when they are testifying to purchases of meat from the cemetery. 'People does *eat* people at Aux Cayes, I *know* it,' said Sam, as he told of human fingernails found on pigs' feet, explaining *to my question* that the pig had been a *zombi*. Had I not followed up his first statement and learned that he had never heard of anybody killed directly for marketing, an idea which amazed him at that, I would certainly have been left with an impression of cannibalism totally misleading."[14]

775 Precisely the same concept exists in Mirebalais as in Jacmel, where the foregoing material was collected, except that in its elaboration it underscores the point made in the quotation just given. *Zombi* meat can be recognized by the fact that it rapidly spoils, and when cooked, brings much white foam to the top of the stew, while such meat, sold as beef, turns white like veal; all this warns against eating it, and shows the active
[776] distaste with which it is regarded. Indeed, one of the duties of a person's *loa* is said to be that of warning him when he is

about to eat such food, for he feels a shudder pass through his 775
body, and his arm becomes heavy, as was the case with a [776]
woman who three times dropped a piece of "beef" she was about to place in her mouth, before she realized the warning.

It can readily be seen how varied are the manifestations of 754
evil magic. What are the forces behind them? What gives them 771
power? What makes their unsavory ends possible of attain- 776
ment? Their power comes from God, for, according to belief, everything comes from God, in the sense that God made the world as it exists. Therefore all beings are free to do anything they can contrive to do, though once dead they are called to account for their deeds. "Good and evil are two brothers; life and death are two brothers. All four come from God. They do not come from the *loa*."

But more immediately this power comes in great measure 754
from the dead. Before a *bocor* makes a *wanga*, he asks permis- 776
sion of God, the Devil, Maît' Carrefour, Maît' Cimitière, [791]
Maît' Gran Bra, and Maît' d'l'Eau. Baron Samedi, perhaps the most important figure among those who aid in working black magic, lives in the cemetery. Though he is a *loa* and may possess those who appeal to him to work evil, this role is subordinate to his role as the power behind magic that kills. He controls the souls of those whose end has come as a result of magic, and when he is called at midnight, the sound of the clanking of chains is heard as he comes. He is envisaged as a dwarf. After his approval has been purchased for a projected deed, appeal is then made to Gede, for especially where it is a question of killing, though everything may have been made ready with Baron, Gede must "dig the grave." Herein lies the importance of Gede, for he is the court of last resort, the final power in matters of death.

Gede, however, is just, and even though Baron has marked a victim, Gede can refuse to concur in his decision. "If you do not merit death, Gede will refuse it," say the Haitians. It therefore sometimes comes about that though all preparations have

754 been made to kill through the use of black magic, Gede re-
776 fuses to "dig the grave," no matter what measures the *bocor*
may take. In such a case the victim may be desperately ill, but
[787] will not die. When a *hungan* divines the cause, offerings are
[782] made to Gede for having saved him from the *magie* of Baron.
For, in the final analysis, "if Gede is in accord with Baron,
death can come, but if the two are not in accord, the man
against whom a *wanga* has been sent will only suffer."

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PART IV

HAITI, A CULTURAL MOSAIC

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CHAPTER XIII

AFRICA AND EUROPE IN HAITIAN LIFE

WITH the historical background of Haitian culture and its 121
present-day organization in mind, we may now seek to disentangle the varied sources from which the institutions described in the preceding pages have been derived. The formalized expressions of religion will be treated in the chapter which follows; here the manner in which Europe and Africa have determined the forms of other phases of Haitian peasant life will be analyzed.

Even such a simple aspect of peasant life as the house, or 342
caille, as it is termed, furnishes an illustration of this inter- 171
mingling of cultures. In the countryside the typical dwelling is a rectangular structure of two rooms with a thatched gabled roof and walls of woven withes daubed with mud.[1] The rectangular floor plan and the roof are of West African type, but since both of these are also familiar in Europe, the house thus probably represents the coalescence of two dwelling forms which were originally not strikingly unlike each other. The type of thatching is purely African, as is the wall construction, for walls of twilled withes can be seen in West Africa today. On the other hand, what there is of furniture is 352
entirely European. The African stool has given way to the 177

352 177 European straight chair, and if peasants often sleep on mats laid on the ground in African fashion, this is only because their resources do not permit them the luxury of beds. 342 The accessory field-house is called an *ajupa*, a designation which represents one of the few recognizable contributions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the island to its present-day culture, since, according to Charlevoix,[2] it was first applied to the huts of the buccaneers, called by them *aioupas*, a name taken over from the Spaniards, who themselves had adapted it from the native Indian term.

291 177 Clothing is also of European style. The men, who wear shirt and trousers, long ago discarded the West African loincloth and the covering great-cloth worn toga-fashion, while the hats they wear are of course equally of European type. The absence of shoes, though characteristic of Africa, is not necessarily of significance, for shoes are not only an accepted article of dress, but are symbols of worldliness, and when lacking from the costume, indicate only an inability to purchase them. The dress of women is no less European, though only the old women continue the fashions of the days of St. John, who reported that "the females generally keep to a long white chemise, covered over with a blue cotton dress that reaches to their bare feet, and is drawn in around the waist."[3] As in his time, white is favored for days of festivity, and the head-kerchief is also seen, even if it is less omnipresent than in his day. The younger women who count themselves sophisticated scorn the kerchiefs and wear hats, but elderly women wind white kerchiefs about their heads in the West [793] African manner. The invariable mark of the *mambu*, in addition to her jeweled fingers, is the white kerchief with a very large straw hat worn over it.

292 177 776 One special form of dress that represents a complex merging of European and African secular and religious customs is the *rade de pénitence*. For men this takes the form of a multicolored shirt, for women a dress whose colors are dictated by

the *loa*. In one instance a man wore a red shirt with black 292
crosses appliquéd on it; dresses of this type worn by women or 177
children are made of cotton cloth, pieced together patchwork- 776
quilt fashion, of either three, seven, seventeen, or twenty-one different colors or patterns, with reds, blues, and white predominating. These garments are worn for a specified time, also named by the *loa*. The term *pénitence* has been taken from Church terminology, and the motivating sanction derives equally from African and Christian concepts;[4] for example, the wearing of the garment is a compliment to the African deities represented by the colors, while the various rules about abstinence during its term of wearing is the European pattern of "penitence."

The elaborate cicatrizations, or raised designs made by 304
scarifying the body, which marked the slaves newly arrived 789
from Africa have quite disappeared, but a few scars can be 178
discerned on the body or arms of a man by a practiced eye. These represent an African carry-over in the form of a *garde* applied by the injection of some magically endowed substance into a cut which thereafter gives what may be thought of as a kind of spiritual inoculation. African fashions of hair- 307
tying have been retained by the women almost unchanged, 178
and, as in Africa, hair-braiding is a highly developed art, so that the styles in which hair can be braided seem innumerable. This is particularly true of dressing the hair of small girls, whose heads are decorated with braids going the length of the skull, or dividing the scalp into small squares, each with its tuft of hair, or by a part in the middle with lines going at right angles from it across the head. These styles of braiding are not named as in other parts of the New World and in Africa, but the tradition of intricate braiding has lost none of its vigor.

The implements of the Haitian are both of European and 412
African derivation. The ubiquitous machete, a saber-like tool 177
employed in all manner of ways, from chopping down trees [439]

412 177 [439] to cutting fruit, though seen in Africa, was probably introduced there by the early traders, and all machetes found today in Haiti are imported from Europe or America. The same is true of the hoe, for the short-handled, broad-bladed West African hoe has given way to the European long-handled type, though the blade of the Haitian hoe is somewhat broader than that used in America and Europe. 241 177 [407] Despite the presence of domesticated animals to draw the plow, this implement has never gained favor in Haiti, nor have recent efforts to teach the Haitian peasant the use of the plow achieved any degree of success. He prefers his African mode of cultivation, to say which implies more than just the employment of a certain implement, since even such matters as the manner in which he employs his hands and feet in the process of planting are included. When the Dahomean plants, for example, he holds a calabash of seed under his left arm, from which he takes the grains with his right hand. As he moves down the rows of newly turned earth, he makes a depression with the heel of his right foot, drops a few grains into this depression and, replacing the earth with his toes, takes a step so that he can repeat the process with his left foot. This is exactly the manner in which Haitians were observed planting in the valley of Mirebalais.[4] [462] [177] Unlike the usage in Africa, however — where the men clear the ground, the men and women plant, and the women tend the growing crops — the European pattern, which places agriculture in all its essential phases in the hands of men, has been taken over almost in its entirety.

252 178 177 [412] The women have retained almost without change the African modes of preparing food. Grain is first pounded in an African-like mortar, with an aboriginal type of pestle, while the shelled kernels are winnowed in a large round basketry tray. The cooking is either done on a raised mud platform in the cooking shelter, as in West Africa, or on three stones, employed as rests for the pots, a method equally characteristic 000 of Africa. In the Haitian cuisine the prevalence of stews, of

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In the Haitian cuisine the prevalence of dishes fried in deep fat, of the generous use of pepper in seasoning, are all African, as are even the names of certain dishes, such as *acansan*, a Nigerian-Dahomean term which designates the cooked balls of cornmeal. One of the few European intrusions is white bread, while the cassava cakes, also important in native diet, derive from the aboriginal Indian inhabitants. 252 262 [171] [177]

In its outward forms the economic system under which the Haitian peasant lives seems entirely based upon European pecuniary patterns. Money follows the French system, even to the official use of the French designation, *centimes*, for the smallest parts of the principal unit of currency, the *gourde*. Both paper money and coins are used, and as the result of the Marine occupation American money is as well known as the currency of the country itself. Buying and selling goes on in the accepted European manner, the price of such export crops as cotton, sugar-cane, and coffee responding to the fluctuations of the world market. In many of its inner aspects also, the values of the Haitian are influenced by the money economy taken over from Europe and America. 436 177 433

The conclusion that the economy of Africa has been swept aside by that of Europe needs, nevertheless, to be qualified if certain historical and psychological factors are not to be ignored. It must not be forgotten that in West Africa, long before the period of European contact, a monetary system based on the cowrie shell had been fully developed. The prestige of wealth, the resulting drive to obtain property, the pursuits of buying and selling, and other aspects of a pecuniary civilization were as current in West Africa at the time of slaving, and continue today, as in Europe or in Haiti. When some of the attitudes associated with the economic life are analyzed, it is no simple matter, therefore, to state whether they stem from African or European sources, or both.

One pattern common to both economies, the validation of position through the conspicuous display of resources, has 556 177

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

556 [179] been largely lost in the peasant culture, possibly because of a prudence dictated by conditions of life wherein evidences of the possession of wealth — certainly in the case of a peasant — were an invitation to those who would despoil him. Only when a family of position gives a ceremony, or when one of its members is married or dies, is the lavishness of its preparations such as to suggest the importance of its place in the community. This does not hold for the individual. Personal [626] [179] ostentation is the more strongly inhibited by the belief that another's envy may bring ill fortune to the one against whom it is directed. In Mirebalais it has almost become a byword that the really substantial citizens look as though they were the poorest. This tradition in no way interferes with the preoccupation with adding to one's possessions, or with the desire to exert the power and enjoy the position that go with a command of large resources, or the will to pass on as large an inheritance as possible to children. In their origin, such drives [179] [178] can be ascribed neither to Europe nor to Africa, nor, for that matter, to the experiences of slavery, but rather to the interplay of two homologous patterns of culture that has produced the economic system and the economic motivations found in Haiti today.

423 [17] [178] In the matter of land tenure, and in attitudes toward private property, African tradition has disintegrated almost completely. Under the characteristic West African form of land tenure, land of a tribe is vested in the tribal head, who allots it to families for use. Trespass upon it is not permitted while it is under active cultivation, and the produce of the land is the property of the one who has worked it. Only palm trees are privately owned by those who have planted them; otherwise land that goes uncultivated for a longer period than is necessary to restore its fertility may be re-allotted. In some regions land worked by an individual is his because of his membership in a large relationship group, whose ownership derives from the power of its ancestors who had lived on this

land, whose bodies are buried in it, and whose spirits watch 423 171
over it. As has been shown in the discussion of property, land
in Haiti is owned privately, and, once title has passed, is subject 422
to no alienation, except at the will of the owner — an 423 [685]
attitude also held toward property of other categories, as is
evidenced by the fact that most of the possessions of a man,
particularly his livestock, are marked for identification, and
theft is severely punished. Even the disposal of stray animals 422
whose owners cannot be identified must follow well-defined
legal procedure, in accordance with which they are held by
the officers of the commune for a stated period of time before
being sold at public auction. All marks on these animals are
carefully noted in the records, so that title to them may be
duly established.

In the organization of production and distribution an African 476
mold, if not full content, predominates. The co-operative 461
work-system, which is so important in maintaining agricultural 178
production, is directly related to comparable groupings
of West Africa, of which a distinctive form is the *dokpwe* of
Dahomey, described when the African origins of Haitian culture
were examined. The *combite*, as an instrument of co-operative
labor and mutual self-help, with its tradition of giving
no pecuniary reward for work done, but of making the
feast which comes at the end of the day's labor adequate return
— all these represent pure retentions of African practice.
Even more striking is the carry-over in the attitudes which go
with these outer forms — the manner in which the participants
look forward with pleasant anticipation to taking part
in *combites*, the enjoyment which they derive from their
group work, and the verve with which the work is done are
clear expressions of these attitudes. The role of the *combite*-song [533]
in exercising social control and enforcing conformity to [626]
local custom is entirely African, as is its function in stimulating
work by setting a rhythm for it.

African, too, is the institution of the market, though in this 443 171 178

443 case certain aspects of the historical development of Haiti
171 have doubtless tended to reinforce African custom. Reference
178 has been made to the fact that the great proportion of traders
are women, a truism in Africa as in Haiti, where by general
rule men are the producers and women the distributors of
[202] goods. In Haiti, however, the fact that for many decades men
were likely to be arbitrarily impressed into military service by
local chieftains when they came to town — particularly in
Mirebalais, which had always been one of the centers of Caco
activity — discouraged them from attending the markets.
Thus African usage has here been reinforced by the historical
443 fact of Haitian political instability. The fact that the proceeds
434 from trading belong to the woman who does the trading, and
562 that in consequence women are encountered who, though
178 married, command independent means and exercise full control
171 over their resources, is a carry-over of African tradition
and, as in Africa, this gives to women a position in the economic
world quite foreign to conventional European practice.

59 The form of the family as found in Mirebalais demonstrates
611 that the African social grouping which comprises all those descended
178 on one side of the family has largely disappeared
[171] there, though it is possible that at least the vestiges of it may
have survived in other regions of Haiti. Yet in West Africa,
though descent is legally counted on but one side of the
family, psychological adherence to the families of both parents
[177] is everywhere important. Therefore it is logical to assume
that this concept, reinforced by the pattern of dual descent
and double familial affiliation of the French, has been retained
in Haiti to the neglect of the aboriginal larger groupings,
where, as has been seen, not only is relationship counted
on both sides of the family, but, more significantly, the right
to reprimand and punish is held and exerted by elders in both
the maternal and the paternal lines. On the other hand, it is
apparent that the feeling for larger relationship groups has
not been entirely lost, particularly in the paternal line, when

such matters as the passing on of the *loa* in families, the duties 59
toward family dead, and the possible inheritance of food 611
taboos are recalled. Like all these survivals, that of food taboos 178
is not as clear in its expression in Haiti as in its aboriginal 262
setting. Its determination is largely by trial and error, so that [843]
a mother, before the birth of her child, not only abstains from
eating the foods harmful to her, but later carefully tries these
on the child to ascertain their effect. Yet the custom, at best,
is a tenuous one. Sometimes, if food uncongenial to a parent
has ill effects on a person, "he goes on eating it until he becomes
accustomed to it"—though this statement brought
forth an emphatic dissent from another Haitian: "Not I! If
a food harms me once, I am through with it."

Africanisms are particularly marked in the organization of 769
and attitudes toward the ancestral cult. Today the fear of the 17
power of the dead is as living in Haiti as in West Africa, despite
the influence of the Catholic Church in changing concepts
of the heavenly world of the dead and the role of ghosts
on earth. It is quite true that the outer forms of ceremonialism
taken by ancestor-worship in West Africa have disappeared;
but when the meticulousness with which the rites of death
are carried out, and the institution of *mangé morts* are remembered,
it is seen that the spirit of African ritual observances
has by no means been lost. African elements have survived
even in the services for the dead, now largely taken over
by the Church. On the anniversary of death a special commemorative
mass is sung in the church, which the family of
the dead attend in a body. Before they leave the habitation [782]
for the mass, however, animals are killed to provide meat for
the feast which follows the Church service, and for the *mangé*
morts, which also takes place at the same time. Immediately [574]
after the mass a reception takes place at the house of some
member of the family who lives in town, or at the home of a
friend, where cakes and liquors are served. At about noon,
however, family and friends proceed to the habitation, where

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a *mangé* is given, and that evening, when the feast ends, dances are held. Two or three *tonnelles* are provided, the most important of these being the one where the Martinique cycle, the social dances most beloved by the ancestors, is danced. In one of the remaining two a European *bal* is held, and in the other are the *vodun* dancers. Thus even in connection with a commemorative Church mass for the dead the *mangé morts* and the dancing of African dances are included.

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The institution of plural marriage, which is socially recognized though not legally sanctioned, is obviously African. Though the *placée* is held in respect and her place in society carries no reproach for herself or her children because of any connotation of immorality, it is of significance for an understanding of the manner of cultural change that prestige in marriage goes with the monogamic union blessed by the Church, and that the "wife"—the woman who is addressed as "Madame"—holds definitely higher social position than the *placée*. Officially the Haitian State is in accord with the position of the Church and recognizes only the European monogamic marriage. Socially, however, African plural marriage is not only tolerated but accepted as a matter of course, and in those instances where plural marriage takes on its most exuberant form, as when men of position have as many as six or seven *placées* in addition to a legal wife, its very size tends to give such a family group, or at least its head, the enviable esteem of his fellow-citizens.

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Within the family, the deference toward older members and the duties and attitudes toward parents-in-law are African both in form and in spirit. The exaction of guarantees from a young man before marriage, and the necessity of his proving to the family of his fiancée that he can support her, are perhaps in their generalized form universals, but as found in Haiti show once more a retention of specific aboriginal traditions. On the other hand, such aspects of marriage as the
[584]
formal *lettre de demand* sent when a match is arranged, or the

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fact that a family will often strike out for itself, deserting [584]
the parental home, show a European independence foreign to
native African thought. Yet the arrangement of meal-times, [264]
and the fact that a wife rarely eats with her husband, are [593]
African, as are the modes of correction, especially the feeling [861]
that flogging with a stick is the best disciplinary method. In- [201]
deed, the characteristic snap of the fingers employed by the [681]
Haitian to indicate a beating is exactly that which is used in
Dahomey to signify beheading! In the attitude toward chil- [855]
dren African traditions have been warped by European cus-
tom, which has introduced a certain hardness of feeling that,
whatever the cost, children must be brought in line with so-
cial convention, together with a resulting harshness of treat-
ment that is anything but African.

Another important facet of Haitian life in which the effect 17
of contact is telling includes art and recreational activities. 322
Perhaps because of the conditions of slavery, or the difficulties of life after independence had been attained, much of these forms of African tradition has been lost, not to be replaced by corresponding borrowings from European sources. Wood-carving, an outstanding element in the æsthetic life of West Africa, is almost entirely absent. Near Mirebalais lives a man who can carve a pipe in the likeness of a human face, but there is no similarity between the products of his craft and West African figurines or masks, and he is thought of as an unusual person whose carving is an interesting but not socially significant avocation. It was stated, though without adequate corroboration, that before the Marine occupation Mirebalais boasted *vodun* drums on which heads "like the ones on these pipes" had been carved. Today the only form of decorative work in wood to be seen is the scroll-work designs which act as ventilating devices over doorways. They are done with the jigsaws of the carpenters, and no fertility of conception or felicity in composition marks these artistically crude efforts.

Other African crafts, which, though essentially utilitarian ooo

178 other African crafts, which, though essentially utilitarian
in Africa, also allow play for the æsthetic impulse, have been
325 lost as well. Ironworking is absent not only because the necessary
326 deposits of iron ore are lacking, but because the technique
of shaping the metal into various forms, which in Africa is in
the hands of specialists, was apparently suppressed in the time
286 of slavery. No native cloth is woven. Basketry has survived,
178 but whereas in Africa designs of no small artistic merit are
285 achieved in this medium, it is markedly utilitarian in Haiti.
Even from a technical point of view, the basketry forms are of the simplest, the panniers used for transportation of products on mule-back being merely an in-and-out weave, and the plaited strips of which hats and the *macoute,* or carrying basket, are made are of a parallel simplicity.

524 Few African recreational forms have survived. *Wari,* the
525 draughts-like West African game found today in many parts
178 of the West Indies, is unknown in the interior of Haiti, though
it has been introduced into Port-au-Prince, where it is played by longshoremen who have learned it from the sailors of near-by islands. String figures, important in West Africa, are not encountered, and no children's pursuits comparable to the play of young Africans were seen in Mirebalais, if the minor ceremony of marking the loss of childhood teeth be excepted. African types of recreation have in the main given way to cock-fights and card-games, both of which derive their interest from the opportunities they offer for gambling — a fact important in itself, since gambling is not one of the widespread African vices. The most important card-games are *trois-sept, marriage,* and *bezique,* and both men and women
541 know them and play them for stakes. Similarly cock-fighting,
particularly during the dry season, is a passionate avocation of the men. Large sums are wagered on the results of an encounter, and feeling often runs high.*

533 The Haitian genius for art and recreation is best embodied
535 in the dance and its accompanying songs and drum rhythms.
Virtuosity is attained not only by the dancers, but even more

especially by the drummers. Experience among other Carib- 533
bean Negro cultures and in Africa itself has failed to reveal 535
greater skill in calling forth intricate rhythms from batteries [171]
of drums than can be found at any Haitian religious gather-
ing. The enthusiasm with which a man takes his place at a
drum, the manner in which he loses himself in his drumming,
the skill with which he maintains the time of his complex
beats in common with two other drummers and those who
manipulate the rattles and the iron, bespeak long training and
a passionate devotion to the art. The same is true of dancing.
The best drummer, the finest dancer, hold positions of esteem [554]
in the community, and on occasion their fame will go beyond
the valley, an occurrence as unusual as it is valued. The excel- 533
lence of the drumming and dancing and the concomitant 535
artistry in song can be understood when one considers the age 868
at which training is begun in these arts. At Mirebalais an in-
fant of no more than two years has been seen to dance credita-
bly, while a young boy of six gave a demonstration of drum-
ming that spoke eloquently of his promise as a drummer of
talent. Before every *vodun* dance the boys take over the drums
while the younger girls dance to their rhythms. They are
watched with a critical eye by their elders, who from time to
time correct them or praise those who do well.

The accompanying musical forms are almost entirely Af- 533
rican in their rhythmic structure, but European influence is 177
traceable in their melodic line, which varies from unchanged 178
European folk-melodies to purely African songs. In the use of
the falsetto, however, in the statement of a theme by a leader
and its repetition by a chorus, and in the countless modula-
tions introduced into the song, the singing is entirely African,
as are the postures struck by those singing.

The importance of the dance is apparent from the large 535
range of dances. Of *vodun* dances there are the *avalou*, or *yan-* 177
valou, a word meaning supplication in the speech of Whydah; 178
the specialized steps for the various Rada and Pétro gods; for 196

535 *magic* and for the Congo, Ibo, and Nago *loa;* the *mazon,* as an
177 interlude dance between possessions; and steps of the *asagwe,*
178 or salute to the gods. There is also the Martinique cycle of sec-
[796] ular dances, including the *zesse, callebasse,* and *banda;* the *rara* dances found only at Easter time, and the social Congo dances. Finally European dancing, called *bal,* is performed to the sound of a drum, a phonograph record, or a small orchestra. With a qualified exception of the last, the type of dancing in all these is African. The essence of style in these dances lies in the manipulation of feet and the muscles of the body, particularly those of shoulders, hips, and buttocks, the patterns of which have been carried over in their entirety from the aboriginal homeland. For men and women to dance with arms about each other, as do Europeans, is still regarded in Mirebalais as immoral.

538 The trait of African culture that has survived most tena-
178 ciously in all the New World, even where European influence has been strongest, is that of folk-literature — of tales, proverbs, and riddles.[7] Though these have flourished in Haiti as elsewhere, prolonged story-telling sessions, so characteristic of other Negro groups, were not encountered in Mirebalais. It is likely that this is principally a seasonal phenomenon, and the failure to find long evenings of story-telling during the summer months, when the rains are at their height and work in the fields is hardest, may properly be an expression of this seasonal variation. As elsewhere in Negro societies, tales and riddles are told at wakes, though their enjoyment by children and their function as a part of the education of the child are as important as in Africa itself. The familiar types of African animal stories and the tales of human tricksters and magicians are well known, and well told. The figure who corresponds to Br'er Rabbit, or to the spider Anansi, is the little 'Ti Malice, while the foil for his pranks is the great awkward Bouki.[8]

One folkloristic element that gives Haitian life a strong African flavor is the proverb, which, as elsewhere in Negro

cultures, is used not only to point morals for the young but as 538
an expression of the characteristically oblique forms of Negro 178
expression in a quarrel, or in sounding a warning, or in commenting
acidly on some social situation. A famous proverb, 539
quoted from the earliest days, is today heard often in Mirebalais: 538
"*Zafai' mouton pas zafai' cabrit*—The affairs of the 178
sheep are not the affairs of the goat"—an injunction against gossip. When a person boasts that no one can harm him, the reply may come: "It is on a narrow path that one has to deal with a difficult horse." Should a man dismiss an experience as of but little consequence to him, he may hear the comment: "Often one pays an ox for a goat." When one person does harm to another, his victim may warn him with the phrase: "Behind the mountains are other mountains." If a man whose fortunes are flourishing attempts to console another who has suffered misfortune, or a rich man jibes at a poor one, the retort may be: "The rock under the water doesn't know how the rock in the sun suffers." To such an extent do proverbs comment on all aspects of life that almost no extended conversation occurs without them. Some of these are of European origin, but both numerically and in their use their character is preponderantly African, as is shown by their specific correspondence to proverbs used today in the regions from which the Negroes of Haiti were derived.[*]

In the practice of magic, and more especially of black magic, 789
it has been noted that African and European traditions have 178
combined into an integrated cultural unit. The outward ex- 177
pression of magic in the charm or "fetish" as an aspect of 754
African life is so obvious that it has been commented on by all observers. In Haiti, though the charms are not prominently displayed and personal charms especially are worn beneath the clothing, this concept of their importance in coping with life has been retained. Yet, as has been seen, Haitian magic is not African alone. For while the forces behind protective magic are primarily the *loa*, and those behind black magic are

789 the powers that control the souls of the dead and those crea-
754 tures of evil whose powers come from Satan — all this being
177 African enough, in the sense that evil magic exists in Africa as
178 elsewhere — the point, which bears repetition, is that the primary sanctions for evil magic have been reinforced by the books of magic handed down from medieval Europe.

789 In this system, however, not only do European books of
177 magic figure, but the Church also has its place. "The things of
178 the Church are always affairs of magic," remarked one Haitian, meaning that they are best adapted to this purpose and are used when the opportunity is had. It is for this reason that great care is taken to keep all sacred objects in churches from the hands of unauthorized persons. To have something that has come from a church, such as a bit of a priest's robe or a few splinters from the statue of a saint, enlists the power of these on behalf of any objective that the maker of magic has in view, and invests any *garde* made with these with the power of God Himself. Thus the twofold meaning of the proverb:
[539] "*Vrai maré corde, vrai wanga, c'est l'Eglise* — The real tying
of the cord, the true *wanga,* is the Church," or, similarly: "*Vrai hungan c'est l'Église* — The true *hungan* is the
[754] Church." However, whether it be through such African-like
practices as the use of colored cloth, or caolin, or the tying of knots, or whether objects filched from the sanctuary of the church be employed, evil magic, derived alike from African and European sources, continues as a potent force of Haitian peasant life. For perhaps in magic more than in any other aspect of his culture has the peasant achieved a synthesis of the two currents that have contributed to his civilization. He has taken from both, and inasmuch as both adhere to a more general pattern which marks all the Old World, neither tradition has had to give way to the other.

CHAPTER XIV

CATHOLICISM AND VODUN

In considering the origins of Haitian religious belief and ritual, 771
those African elements which have been retained in their 776
aboriginal purity may be first presented. The importance of 171
the Dahomean and Nigerian elements in the *vodun* cult are
self-evident when the deities derived from the peoples of these
areas are detailed. It has been stated that the name of one of
the important "companies" of gods, Rada, is a contraction of
the word *Arada,* which is the name of the Dahomean town Allada.
This group includes Damballa Wedo, Aida Wedo, Aizan,
Legba, Agwe Woyo, Agweto, Sobo, and Sobo-Bade, which
come directly from Dahomey, where they are members of the
heavenly pantheons; and Agasu, Siligbo, and Loko, who are
sacred ancestors of Dahomean relationship groups. The term
Dahomey itself also figures in the name of such *loa* as Erzilie
Freda Dahomey, where Freda with all consistency represents a
corruption of the name of Whydah, a Dahomean seaport. The
Nago, or Yoruban peoples of Nigeria, have a religious system
which parallels that of Dahomey, so that many Rada gods,
such as 'Batala, the Yoruban "great god," or Ogun, the Yoruban
deity of war, or Shango, the god of thunder, are of Nago
origin; Badagri, on the other hand, is the name of a Nigerian
town. A prominent *loa* derived from this general area not 776
found to be exclusive to the Rada group is Gedeonsu, or 171
Gede, a Dahomean totem. Of the Pétro group, Wangol (Roi

776 d'Angole) is obviously Angola, while the designations Ibo
171 and Congo speak for themselves. Simbi is a Congo deity, as are Bumba and Lemba. Finally, in the categories of gods im-
[162] portant in the regions of Haiti other than Mirebalais are the Loa Sénégal, and the Loa Mondong, both of which are names of African tribes mentioned in the early literature as contributing to the Haitian slave population. But all recognition of geographical names as such has disappeared, and they have been transmuted into designations of gods.

192 Outstanding here is the word *vodun* itself, already indicated
197 as Dahomean, where it is a general term for "deity," though in Haiti its use has become more restricted and the symbol for deity has become the word *loa*, or *mystère*. The origin of the designation *loa*, which has been claimed to be a corruption of the French *roi*, is debatable. It is true that in West Africa certain deities are regarded as kings, yet this derivation is not convincing in view of the fact that in the *vodun* cult as found in Haiti at present or as described in earlier sources the *loa* are never generally referred to as kings, something that tends to strengthen statements that have been made to the effect that the word comes from the language of a Congo tribe.[1] The source of the root *hun-*, which figures in the terms *hungan*, *hunsi*, and *humfort*, is clear, for in Dahomey it is a synonym for the word *vodun*. *Hungan* and *hunsi* are even more definitely traceable than *humfort*, since the ending *-gan*, the Dahomean word for chief, designates the priest as the chief of the spirits, and *-si*, "wife," is employed in the sense of "wife of the god" or his devotee, in Africa as in Haiti. The female counterpart of *hungan*, *mambu*, cannot be definitely assigned, but may be of Bantu derivation, and is certainly an African word.

776 Other uncontaminated Africanisms can be discerned in the
171 attitude of the Haitians toward the *loa* and in the ceremonies
178 for them. One of the most characteristic is the inheritance of
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769 *loa* in families, a direct survival of the belief which not only

makes for deification of the family dead, but constitutes the 776 771
oldest ancestor of a relationship group one of the great gods 778 424
and thus causes families to give primary allegiance to a re- 769
stricted number of deities. The most striking aspect of this
tradition preserved in Haiti is that all ceremonies must be 787
given by family groups, and at them only members of the fam- 796
ily may with propriety become possessed. Possession itself, and 771 778
the elements which constitute the possession complex — the 53
use of the drums, the rhythms associated with particular gods, the importance of songs in calling the spirits, the mode of worship through specific dances for specific deities — these make up another series of Africanisms. In the dance itself the use of iron to sound basic rhythms for the drums, the outer form and function of the rattle, and the fact that the circle of participants always rotates in a counter-clockwise direction, are equally African. The modes of behavior to be observed as possession comes on and the psychological release that follows it both derive from the same source, as do the beliefs that rituals must be held on the days sacred to the particular god being worshipped.

Another retention of African tradition is a belief in the im- 771
portance of sacrifice. It will be remembered that it is held to 778
be more essential to " feed " the gods than to dance for them. 782
This is also the tradition of all peoples of the region from which the slaves were derived, and in a sense reflects the very immediate relationship that obtains between Africans, or Haitians, and their gods. Since in both regions each deity performs the double role of doing good for those who worship it properly and harassing those who neglect it, the importance of giving adequate sacrifices to avert evil is evident. In both Haiti and Africa, however, these may differ with the wealth of the individual giving the offering, with the number of persons who contribute toward the ceremony where offerings are given, or with the seriousness of the situation which the deity is being asked to remedy. That the gods permit such varia-

171 178 782 tion is a further comment both upon the human traits ascribed to them, and upon the realism with which they take cognizance — as only African gods can — of the financial position of their devotees!

171 178 776 778 It is not only in the immediacy of the Haitian gods to their worshippers and in their human qualities, however, that these beings have retained African traits, for in the full reciprocity that must prevail in the relationship between deities and their followers is to be seen a point of view that is entirely non-European. Between man and the gods the rule of *quid pro quo* must always be in operation; and this rule may only be regarded as but another contribution of Africa toward Haitian religious ideology. While this reciprocal giving flavors all aspects of worship whether it be of the *loa*, the dead, or the twins, it takes a yet more prominent, and more familiar place in the field of magic, since here the *engagement* owes much to European belief, though the element of reciprocity is much more emphasized than was ever the case in medieval European diabolism.

178 776 794 The psychological values of the *vodun* cult, especially the general tone found in the feeling toward the terms *Guinée* or *Rada*, perhaps most convincingly show the attitudes that aided in the retention of things recognizably African. For while the
[184] Pétro gods are by no means viewed as altogether bad, or are always held unwelcome, the fact that in Mirebalais, as in Haiti generally, the Rada gods are those least feared, most desired, and in connection with whose cult wrongdoing is most rarely present, is of the greatest significance, especially when the related fact is recalled that the Pétro gods are the more powerful in the matter of evil magic, while the Rada deities are said to exert their power to protect their devotees from the dark forces that may be set in motion against them.

178 771 776 In attitudes toward the gods, then, in the names of the gods themselves, in the manner in which they function in the lives of Haitians, and in the importance of the ceremonial con-

nected with them, much of African tradition which has carried 178
over into Haitian religious life has been retained in pure 771
form. Yet the intrusion of Catholic custom into these African 776
patterns — often noted, though generally in passing — also 177
must be studied if the significance of the forms of Haitian folk-religion 771
is to be grasped. That this aspect of *vodun* has received 794
the scant attention it has had is probably to be ascribed to two causes.[3] The first takes the Catholic element for granted, so that even where a particularly dramatic element of Catholic practice is seen in an African setting, such as a crucifix or the portraits of the saints on a *vodun* altar, specific mention is made of this without attempting to dissect its historic or psychological role. The second reason for the comparative disregard of Catholic influence is that for Europeans it is a commonplace. Spirit possession and sacrifices, African song and drum rhythms are more " exciting " than prayers or hymns of the Church. Underlying both these causes is the deep-rooted and unquestioned assumption that, in contact with any non-European culture, the patterns that govern European behavior must prevail. Consequently, is it not in the nature of things that Catholicism should have taken root in the *vodun* cult? Is not rather the matter to be stressed that African traditions should have been retained at all? That the process should actually have been one of amalgamation rather than of dominance is rarely taken into account. Yet to go deeper into the significance of this process in Haitian life is to open far-reaching vistas.

An outstanding sanction taken by the *vodun* cult from 177
Catholicism is that of the baptismal rites. Though ceremonies 771
of consecration are a commonplace in Africa, and the African 794
ritual of washing the head — *lavé tête,* as it is termed — has 788
not been forgotten, in Mirebalais the importance of baptism 778
as a means whereby human beings obtain their place in this world and in the next has been carried over and applied to all matters of ceremonial significance. Thus just as in the lives of

177 the saints of the Church the sacrament of baptism was a crucial
771 rite, so the *loa* must be baptized before they become forces
794 which act in a recognized and predictable manner. Just as the
788 objects used in the rituals of the Church must be sanctified by
778 being blessed and sprinkled with holy water, so in the *vodun* cult a *humfort*, the drums, the iron, and the rattle must all undergo a similar sanctification, not only that they may possess proper supernatural power, but more importantly that they may perform their functions in the very serious and African matter of calling the *loa* and placating the supernatural beings of the *vodun* cult.

Herein lies the importance of the *prêt' savanne.* Since the
177 official representatives of the Church not only have nothing
793 to do with the *vodun* cult, but excoriate it on all occasions,
794 the *prêt' savanne*, as a man who can read the prayers of the
788 Church, plays an indispensable role and to that extent is to be regarded as a functioning member of the *vodun* cult, despite the fact that he has no control over the *loa* and, as far as was observed, does not participate actively in their worship. At the same time, it must not be inferred that in borrowing " baptism " from the Church this rite has been elevated to the most important place in the ritual of the *vodun* cult, for though the *prêt' savanne* must read prayers " from the book " and sprinkle his holy water, the actual " baptizing " is carried out by the *hungan.* In sanctifying a *humfort*, the end in view is to induce
778 the *loa* to come after the baptism and to insure that no unaccountable or untoward deeds may come to pass within it. Similarly, though drums must be baptized with Church prayers and holy water that they may perform their allotted tasks, without the concomitant ritual of the *hungan* they would be no more empowered to call the gods than they were before the prayers of the Church were read over them. An analogous comparison can be made between the role of the *prêt' savanne* and that of the *hungan* in the *service.* Since the world

is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of 177 793
His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But 794
the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and 788
it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne*
that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian,
hold emotional force and psychological value.

In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preced- 534
ing chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African 782
spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustra- 778
tion can be given of this merging of traditions than in a de- [777]
tailed account of the manner of making and validating *vodun*
drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation was pronounced by their maker and an offering — a *mangé sec* — was made, that all the gods might come when called by the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *verver* described about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same re-
freshment. After the tree had been felled and that part of the [322]
trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark, and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin* was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant *manman*. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head is first attached here; and here the cord about the head is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always be first struck when the completed drum is tuned.

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The drumheads were cut from a large ox-hide, purchased in the market place. In the early morning sunlight another " little ceremony " was performed before they were attached. Placing the three unheaded bodies of the drums in a row, with the iron in its place, the maker poured *clairin* before each, and having cut a native candle in three pieces, he took them in his left hand as he crossed himself, saying: "*Au nom d' Père, au nom d' Fils, au nom d' Saint Esprit.*" He then [788] lighted the three wicks, and taking each lighted candle in turn in his right hand, he made the sign of the cross with it and attached it to the " mother peg " of each drum. There the flames were allowed to flicker for a moment before the work of heading the drums began.

534 The hide was first attached to the " mother peg," then to the one opposite, and then to the two at right angles to the first pair. This is hard work, for to obtain the proper degree of initial tautness several men must strain at the resistant hide, and that is why four cuts are made where a peg is to go instead of the three that are needed, for frequently a strip breaks and the extra hole is used to re-thread the peg. The great drum has nine pegs, the one of medium size seven, and the small one six, not five, " because the *boula* is a thief, taking the beat away from the iron." The head was cut away from the rest of the great ox-hide only after it was in place. The final step was to knot the cord — braided the day before, of native sisal — to the *manman* peg of each drum, and then to twine it eight, six, or five times about their bodies.

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The drums, now finished, were then put aside for a week to allow the damp heads to dry, awaiting the final sanctification. During this period they could not be played. It was held unwise to do more than tap them lightly with the finger-nail to test their resonance and the extent to which the heads were dry. Meanwhile preparations were being made for the baptism. Drums, like human beings, must be clothed when they [292] appear in public, and *rades*, apron-like garments, a white bro-

cade for Damballa, a red print for Ogun, and a third, a flow- 534
ered blue material, for all the other gods, were first made. 778
They were ruffled at the bottom, with strips of the material, 788
attached as are apron-strings, to hold them in place. Four eggs, [292]
three "native" candles, three white candles, white flour, corn flour, two cassava cakes, two biscuits, three small-sized loaves of bread, two bottles of *kola*, *clairin*, and holy water, were also provided for the baptism. Finally on the appointed day — a Saturday, so that the drums could afterwards be used for a *vodun* dance — the drums, drumsticks, and iron, with the dresses and the food that had been provided for the ceremony, were taken to the scene of the rite, a habitation where a *tonnelle* had been built for the accompanying dance.

The ceremony began at about five o'clock in the afternoon, [608] the drums being dressed by their godmothers. Just as a child who is to be baptized in church must have godparents, so drums must have their godparents, and following the logic of this position, since the owner of the drums is regarded as their father, he uses the terms *compère* and *commère* for those who have "stood up" with his drums, just as he would for those who might sponsor his children. The *prêt' savanne* first [793] called for some twigs from an orange tree and a bit of cotton, as the drums, standing on end, were covered with a clean white cloth. Grouped about them and ranged behind the officiant were the owner and godparents of the drums, holding lighted candles in their hands, with which they made the sign of the cross from time to time. As the prayers began, the participants crossed themselves, and the *prêt' savanne* sprinkled the drums with holy water, using a spray of orange-leaves. Among his prayers were the Credo, the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, and the Salve, interspersed with hymns sung by the assembled group. After about half an hour of prayer the officiant, holding an egg in his hand, made the sign of the cross three times over each of the drumheads. Ordinarily the eggs would have been broken, their contents rubbed on the drum-

534 778 788 heads, and *clairin* poured over these, but on this occasion the rite was postponed, for the eggs would have dampened the drumheads so they could not have been played for the evening's dance. Yet this deviation from the strict ritual did not permit any laxity in meeting the obligation when promised — that is, the day following the dance.

534 778 788 793 The *hungan* took charge as soon as the prayers were finished. Placing the drums to form a triangle on the ground, with the iron, rattles, and sticks near by, he put the offerings inside the space enclosed by the bodies, and with white cornmeal made *vever* about them, while at the foot of each drum he placed an egg; then, covering the drums with a clean cloth, he threw parched corn on it. From time to time he interrupted his silent invocations by ringing a bell held in one hand, until the arrival of the time for the vehement haggling over the price of his services, which interrupted the ritual. [552] This matter settled, he asked for the names to be given the drums, and proceeded to "christen" the small one Gran' Siligbo, the middle-sized Damballa, and the great drum Ogun Shango. At this point, were the owner desirous of having special powers given his drums, as is frequently the case, the *hungan* would endow them with a *n'âme,* or soul, at the same time instructing the spirit of the drums, called *huntór,* in what was desired of it, and prescribing what must be given the drums by their owner to make their powers effective. But in this case no such *n'âme* was asked, and the ceremony continued.

Summoning the gods, he lifted the cloth over the drums and instructed the "father" to pour water in three places between them, to set the drums on end, and to beat one of them. This was the *seconde,* called Damballa, and its having been initially struck indicated that the god after whom it was 534 778 788 named was most important for this set. This ended the ceremony of baptism, and the drummers took charge so that the evening's dance might begin, for now the drums were ready for all uses to which those of their type are put. During their making and after their completion they had been sanctified by rites that vividly illustrate the merging of traditions in Haitian religion: by means of offerings to the African gods, and through baptism by the rites of the Church.* 534 778 788 [777]

The *action de grâce* is another integral part of *vodun* ceremonialism that is essentially Catholic, since its lengthy service is composed entirely of prayers and hymns of the Church. As has been shown, the *action de grâce*, which precedes a *vodun service*, takes place before an "altar" which, important both then and at the later, more African rites, in itself documents in no small measure the combining of Catholicism and *vodun*. One, employed at a *service* not described in the earlier chapters, was covered with a red and white checked table-cloth, on top of which a smaller white cloth was spread.* Pinned to the canopy and to the front of the table-cloth were various chromolithographs of the saints; St. Michael attacking the Devil, Mater Dolorosa, St. James, the Virgin Mary and Jesus (the Assumption), and St. Expeditius. In front of the representation of St. James stood a crucifix with the figure of Jesus, in accordance with the custom of never omitting to have one of these at any *vodun* ceremonial. The table bore many offerings; at the back were four bottles of soft drinks, with cups; while also to be seen were several hard rolls, an ear of corn, a dish containing eggs, and another holding, among other things, rice. One of the containers on the table held holy water, while candles for use both in the *action de grâce* and in the later *vodun* rituals lay beside this. Thus crucifix, candles, pictures of the saints, and holy water were combined in this ceremony with offerings of food and drink to be given the gods that the ancestors had brought from Africa.* The songs sung at the vodunistic portions of these *services* also reflect the psychological unity of Catholic and African elements in *vodun* worship. One of these declares: 776 779 778 [353] [776] [538] [539]

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* This altar is shown in the illustration facing p. 190.

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Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.
Santa Maria,	St. Mary,
Qui sorte nan Guinée.	Who came from Guinea.
Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.

Another for the Virgin of Allada, sung in Leogane, is as follows:

Santa Maria la Madaleine,	St. Mary Magdalene
Prié pou' loa yo.	Pray for their *loa.*
O Allada-e,	O Allada-e,
Sonné une sonne pou' moin,	Ring a bell for me,
Pour m'allé.	So I may go.
M'dit, Allada-o,	I say, Allada-o
Sonné une sonne	Ring a bell
Pou' les pitites nagé.	For the drowned children.

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Of these elements, the portraits of the saints, or *images,* offer one of the most vivid instances of the mingling of African and European elements in Haitian belief, for they are the outward symbol of the psychological reconciliation that has been effected between the saints of the Church and the African deities. This is nothing peculiar to Haiti alone. In West Africa, wherever Catholicism has obtained something of a foothold, certain pagan deities are regularly identified with saints of the Church, and the same phenomenon is found in Cuba[8] and Brazil.[9] This identification of saints with the *loa,* whether initiated as a ruse against the detection of African worship or emanating from a reasoned analogy, would seem in Haiti, at least, to act as a device to achieve an adjustment between two conflicting systems by emphasizing the resemblance between Catholic saints and African nature deities. The importance of the *images* as symbolizing the reconcilia-

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tion is consequently of the first order, while the presence of 353
these chromolithographs in every Haitian hut and on the 778
altars of *vodun* ceremonies indicates how deeply the accept- 776
ance of this identification has gone. In the house occupied in 177
Mirebalais during this investigation, the following *images*
were found on the wall:

Moses
St. Augustine
Our Lady of Mount Carmel
St. Peter the Apostle
St. Michael
St. Clara
Baptism of Christ
Peter and Paul

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the owner of the house, when renting it, stipulated that these *images* were to remain in place, for their power kept the house, its contents and occupants from harm.

No greater concurrence of opinion is had in the designations 776
of saints given to corresponding *loa* than in any other facet of 177
Haitian belief. Those here listed were obtained in two ways: either the equivalents of *loa* were named in the course of discussions with priests and other members of the *vodun* cult, or the *images* themselves were shown to members of the cult, and the names of the corresponding *loa* were recorded. Mater Dolorosa is held by most persons to be Gran' Ezilie, but in one instance this figure was equated with Ezilie Freda Dahomey with the insistent qualification that the two were not the same *loa*. The saint is represented as richly clothed, wearing many rings and necklaces and surrounded by other evidences of great wealth, so that the correspondence arises from the fact that Ezilie is held to be the richest of the *loa*. Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia is related to the *loa* Kpanyol, or the Spanish *loa*, while Notre Dame de Grâce is the water-goddess

known as La Sirène. St. Anne and St. Philomena are also regarded as water-deities, the first being Adamisil Wedo, the second the *loa* Christalline, a strong evil spirit dwelling in the sea. With one exception, Legba was held the equivalent of St. Anthony; in this other instance his similarity to St. Peter was stressed. St. Peter is held by most persons to be the *loa* St. Pierre, though this again is disputed, *loa* St. Pierre being believed by some to be the spirit who validates the sacred polished stone axes which in Haiti, as in Africa, are called "thunder stones." The identity of St. Andrew was also disputed, some saying he is Simbi, others that he is Azaka Mede, a river god whose name is clearly derived from that of the stream across which, it is believed in Dahomey, all dead must pass. One person identified Airan with Christ, but this would seem to be a conclusion personal to him.

Of the Ogun *loa*, St. James is conceived as Ogun Ferraille. St. Joseph is identified with Ogun Balandjo, because this *loa* is a healer, and St. Joseph is shown holding a child, his hand upraised in blessing. St. Patrick, on whose *image* serpents appear, is correlated with Damballa Wedo Tokan, or simply the rainbow serpent Damballa Wedo, while Moses, because of the miracle he performed before Pharaoh, is held to be the father of Damballa. St. Expeditius is Agwe, and St. Anthony the Hermit either 'Ti Jean Pétro or Simbi en Deux Eaux. St. Louis, the patron saint of Mirebalais, is a *loa* Wangol, as are two of the kings who figure in the adoration of the Christ-child, Balthazar and Gaspar. The *marasa*, logically enough, are believed the same as the twin saints, Comas and Damien, while the "protector of the *marasa*" is St. Nicholas, because the several children on his *image* are interpreted as *marasa*, *dosu*, and their succeeding siblings.[7]

The Haitian often carries this matter further, either conceiving saints as themselves powerful *loa*, or creating "saints" for himself out of the forces of nature or other powers in the universe. The most outstanding example in the former category is St. John the Baptist, worshipped as *loa* St. Jean Baptiste, who sends the thunder and lightning. The power and irresponsibility which characterize him contrast strangely with the gentle child holding a lamb, shown on the *image*. The connection becomes apparent in the light of African mythology, however, where the ram is the emblem of the god of thunder, while following this same belief lambs are sacrificed to St. Jean Baptiste in Haiti. The following myth is told of him: 776 777 [539]

> On a given day of the year God permits each saint to have control over the universe. St. John the Baptist, however, is so irresponsible, and his rage so violent, that God fears the consequences if he were allowed to exert his power on his day. By plying him with drink the day before, he is therefore made so drunk that when he falls asleep he does not awaken for five days. When he is told his day has already passed, his rage is so terrible that great storms flay the earth, and it is a commonplace in Mirebalais that this day is marked by thunder and lightning storms of almost hurricane proportions. Though he can do some damage, his power is now limited, however, to his own sphere.

In the second category are the forces of nature personified and worshipped as saints. Among those specifically named were St. Soleil (St. Sun), St. la Lune (St. Moon), Sts. Étoiles (St. Stars), and St. la Terre (St. Earth). Even more striking is the concept that the power capable of bringing reverses is to be worshipped, as a copy of an *oraison* to St. Bouleversé which was obtained clearly shows: [821] 776 777 539

> St. Bouleversé, you who have the power to overturn the earth, you are a saint and I am a sinner. I invoke you, and I take you for my patron from today onward. I send you to seek out such-and-such a one; overturn his head,

177 776 534 overturn his memory, overturn his thought, overturn his house, overturn for me my enemies visible and invisible; cause the thunder and the tempest to break them into pieces. And in honor of St. Bouleversé, three Paters and three Ave Marias. . . .[8]

771 179 796 Thus it is seen how Catholicism invades the beliefs and rites of the *vodun* cult. In an analogous fashion *vodun* has not failed to make itself felt in certain festivals of the Church,[9] for while elements of *vodun*, rigidly suppressed inside the Catholic churches, are absent except in so far as they can be carried on surreptitiously, they are nevertheless integral parts of these fêtes in the minds of the folk who make pilgrimages to them. So arresting is the resulting mingling of practices, and so significant for the amalgamation of cultures that has taken place in Haiti, that a detailed discussion will be given of the most prominent instance of this type, the festival in honor of the Virgin of the Palms, which takes place each year on July fifteenth at Ville-Bonheur, or, as it is better known, at Saut d'Eau. The festival of 1926 has been described by Price-Mars;[10] here certain observations made during the fête of 1934 may be given, especially as they have to do with those aspects of the mythology which validate the festival, and as they illustrate the non-Catholic, voduistic phases of the celebration, of importance for the points being considered in this chapter.

778 179 787 [796] [538] Beside the church, Ville-Bonheur has three especially sacred spots, St. John, En bas Palmes, and Saut d'Eau — the falls themselves. At St. John is a large *campêche* tree surrounded by many palms, from beneath which flow streams of water. St. John is said to have appeared here, carrying his scepter as in the chromolithographs, and at that time water began to flow in the sacred springs, and except for one short period has continued ever since as holy water, being used for drinking and bathing, but never for purposes of cooking. The priests

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ABOVE, *Consecrating the drums: the "godfathers" and "godmothers" standing by with lighted candles as prayers of the Church are recited.*

BELOW, *The vodun priest employing African rites to complete the consecration of the drums.*

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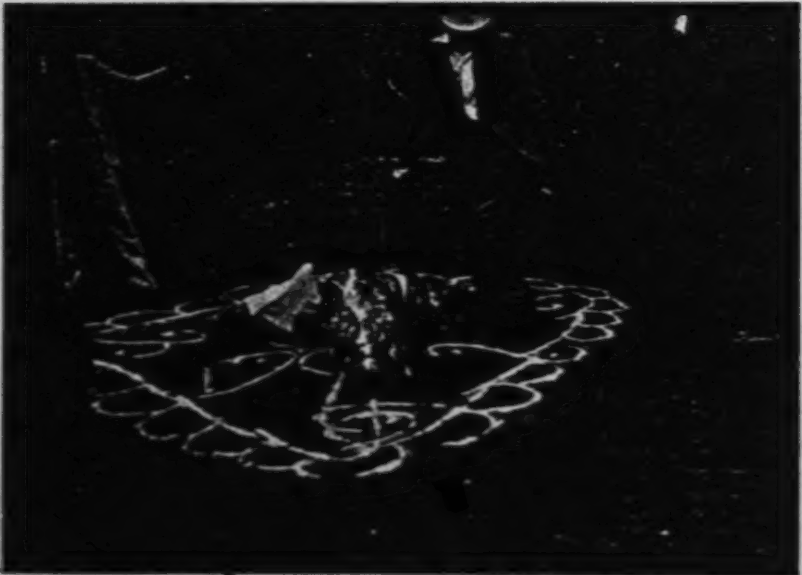

[facing p. 282]

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AT SAUT D'EAU

ABOVE, *Large crowds of worshippers drawn by this fête of the Church.*

BELOW, *Possession coming on as a vodun deity "mounts the head" of a devotee who, climbing a tree, exhorts those gathered to hear him.*

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[facing p. 283]

stationed near by did not at first believe in this miracle, until 778
after several appearances of the saint the higher authorities 177
of the Church gave the fête their sanction. Many tales are re- 787
counted of skeptics who, though coming to scoff, became filled with awe when they put foot in the holy place and — significantly for the merging of the two religions — were possessed by *loa* for the first time. A church which has since burned and a small chapel were erected at the site which now is the entrance to the enclosure before the present church. This is the old calvary enlarged, and here the statue of the Virgin, saved when the earlier church burned, is found. Next to this church are the uncompleted walls of the structure which is to be a new and larger church. It is said, however, that this edifice has given much trouble, for each time the walls reach a certain height they fall. The people say: "The Virgin does not like this place," and believe that a simpler church should be built where the old one stood.

The vision of the Virgin at En bas Palmes is believed to 778
have occurred several times, most recently as placed by a lively 173
tradition in the days of the American Marine occupation, 177
when a priest is said to have caused both St. John and En bas 787
Palmes to be closed for several years because, as at present, 776
many who prayed at the church also took occasion to worship their *loa*.

> During the fête, however, the tale goes, the Virgin appeared on a palm tree. The people, on their knees worshipping, sent to the priest to come and pray. He declared it merely superstition, however, and called an American Marine captain stationed at Mirebalais to help him suppress this worship. The captain ordered a Haitian sergeant to shoot the vision, but the Virgin merely moved to another tree; another shot, and she moved again. They cut down the tree, and those who looked on with terror saw the vision slowly ascend to the sky. As the priest

778 turned to leave, word came that his house had burned
776 and nothing in it was saved. Later he suffered a paralytic
173 stroke from which he never recovered. Some say that the
177 American captain became ill and was sent to the States
787 "as a punishment for what he had done." Several days later the sergeant was found mad, wandering in the woods. Since he had fired under orders, however, his punishment was but temporary, and on being cured he returned to Ville-Bonheur to ask pardon of the Virgin. Today he lives in Mirebalais. When they saw the American ill, the priest paralyzed, the sergeant mad, and the presbytery burned, "public clamor" became so strong that both St. John and En bas Palmes were reopened.[11]

778 In 1932 a cyclone at St. John tore down trees and houses and
731 hurt but did not kill the worshippers who had gathered there.
177 An eyewitness insisted he had seen the enormous whirling cloud rise from the sacred place. He had no time to reach his house, for with a noise like a cannon-shot the whirlwind came, and an enormous oak tree fell just behind him — "I saw death staring at me." Today he carries two scapularies to the Virgin to protect him.

778 The third sacred spot is at the falls themselves, where the
796 grandeur and beauty of the scene is such as to induce the re-
787 ligious thrill almost unaided, and where great numbers go in
177 the course of their pilgrimage to Ville-Bonheur. There are
[788] two falls, situated at a distance of several miles from the village, one for Damballa and one for Aida Wedo, and it is believed that those who bathe in the sacred streams become possessed. It is said that the palms near by are sacred to the Virgin, but others hold that they are for Damballa. Many visit the falls on the day preceding the fête, but the largest throng hurries there immediately after the principal mass, when the greatest number of possessions and the most violent
000 seizures by the *loa* occur. The falls, therefore, in association

The falls, therefore, in association
with the purely Catholic rituals carried on at the village 778
church, are seen to hold an important if unofficial place in the 796
complex of rites known in the Haitian Church calendar as 177
the Fête of Saut d'Eau.

During the two or three days preceding the fête and on the 778
fifteenth of July itself, an air of great gayety not unlike the 796
carnival spirit accompanying European Church festivals per- 78
vades the surrounding country. Camions traverse the almost 177 (194)
impassable side road, bringing crowds of people from Port-au-Prince, from the Dominican border, and even from the north, who throng the streets and the shrines and tramp the miles from the village to the waterfalls or visit the nearer sacred sites of St. John's Wood and En bas Palmes, to light candles and ask the satisfaction of their needs. Like the falls themselves, these spots by their very beauty awaken a sense of emotional awareness, and it is not strange that here, as at the falls, many possessions occur. At night, in particular, the great trees with their interlacing serpent-like roots, the gaping earth which at En bas Palmes is witness to the uprooting of the palm trees where the miracle occurred, and the stream of sacred water, all make a scene of indescribable eeriness, heightened by the flickering candles given as offerings, and the open lamps of those who stay the night here to fulfill their vows.

In the town itself gambling and other games go on, and 796
dances of all kinds are held at night, among them *vodun* and 787
bal, though at these public dances no possessions are counte- 177
nanced. One of the most colorful aspects of the scene is the [524]
penitants, wearing clothing of varied colors in fulfillment of [525]
a request by the *loa* they worship or an obligation to them. [535]
Such folk are not permitted in church unless the clothing [782]
which marks them is covered by ordinary dress, but they walk [292]
the streets, often possessed and often using their power to heal [755]
those whom they encounter. Possessions by Ogun, by Gede, by Baron Samedi, by Damballa, by Erzilie and other *vodun* deities were observed, particularly at the shrines, where their
devotees prophesied and healed the sick.

000 796 782 776 177 devotees prophesied and healed the sick. Even at the church, however, where all go to offer the prayers that are the central observance of the fête, the many candles placed on the rocks at the entrance are usually for St. Anthony; that same St. Anthony who, it will be recalled, is the *loa* named Legba, the guardian of all entrances.

771 177 It is obvious, from the examples given, that the world view held by the Haitian and the motivations which underlie Haitian life cannot be understood unless both the Catholic and the *vodun* contributions to them are held in mind. But certain further questions bearing upon the effect of these two influences present themselves. What proportion of Haitians hold membership in the Church, and how many are affiliated with the *vodun* sect? What attitudes are manifested toward the Church and its priests as contrasted with their attitude toward the *loa* and their ministrants? How does the Church meet the challenge of *vodun*? And how does the Haitian peasant, in his inner life, reconcile these two conflicting forces?

The impression gained from reading available works on Haiti is that voduists and Catholics constitute two distinct [184] groups. While this may obtain in some parts of the Republic, it is not true either in Mirebalais or in those other portions of Haiti which came under direct though brief observation in the course of this study. All discussions with natives that began with the assumption of the existence of two such separate groups led to confusion, and statements which had seemed evasions were not clarified until the incorrectness of such an assumption became apparent. Thus when it was stated that in all Haiti the Pater Noster was one of the first things taught every child, the question: " Is this not true for Catholic families only? " was met with a vigorous denial that was slowly justified as the realization grew that, if not true for all Haitians, such an assertion was certainly valid for the vast majority of them in Mirebalais and probably elsewhere.[12] The identity of membership in the two groups became apparent from ob-

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servation when, for example, the baptismal rites which received into the Church the children of known active participants in *vodun* ceremonies were witnessed. It became even more convincing when experience taught that the best place to encounter an elusive *hungan* or *mambu* was at early Sunday-morning mass. Only when it was realized that no dichotomy exists in Mirebalais between Catholicism and *vodun*, but that both are necessary if all the supernatural beings that control man and man's destiny are properly to be worshipped, was a true perspective obtained.[13]

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There are certain Protestant sects which have been increasingly successful in making converts among the Haitian people, particularly in the north, whose adherents stand in strong hostility to *vodun*. A type of Protestantism that has had the best reception is one comparable to the "shouting" sects of the United States and the British West Indies, where the appeal through patterns of possession, dancing, and other aspects of ritual close to the familiar African forms of behavior is evident and relatively little psychological shift is needed to make membership in such a church acceptable.[14] The Protestant church in Mirebalais, hovever, is more sober. It commands only a very small proportion of the townspeople, and draws even fewer from the surrounding countryside, while the Catholic voduists look upon it with a scorn that is exemplified in the answer to a question about the ritual of Protestant funerals: "*Moun chita, chanté zhymnes*—People sit, and sing hymns! " Two or three well-substantiated cases of conversion to Protestantism came about because, despite the sacrifices made to the inherited *loa* and the prayers to the saints, these individuals continued to experience ill fortune, until in desperation the Protestant minister had been called to banish the family *loa*, to cut down the sacred trees on the family habitation, and to destroy the house of worship, with the objects in it. These deeds of "desecration" were, however, followed by no renewed disasters, and while from the point of view of

797 798 the voduists this is not regarded as decisive proof of the power of Protestantism, for those immediately concerned it is held sufficient.[16]

771 177 What, then, of the attitudes held by voduists toward the Catholic Church? The correlation of Catholic ritual with *vodun* practice made by Haitians is of utmost significance in this connection. In discussing the Church service, it was pointed out that church bells announce mass or any other rite, and this, it was explained, is for Legba — "*Toute cloche c'est pou' Legba, même l'église, oui* — All sounding of bells is for Legba, even in church," for he must be notified so that he can "open the gate" for God, Jesus Christ, and the saints. "*Nou' même nou' connai' ça. C'est Bon Dieu crée tout* — You yourself know that. It is God who created everything." It was also recounted how when the priest preaches, he is possessed by the *mystères* of the sacred Trinity, for does he not gesticulate and become excited like any other possessed person?

Furthermore, it is believed that Gede, Ogun, and Damballa "are always at the church," often insisting that their worshippers take communion. Indeed, occasionally the *loa* of a woman may demand a Church marriage from a man to whom she is a *placée*. The sacraments of baptism, first communion, marriage, confession, and extreme unction are received by members of the *vodun* cult, though, as will be seen, when voduists [793] [788] confess, they say nothing of their *loa*. The *hungans* themselves "are most often at the sacred table to take communion," and one particular *hungan* not only attended mass, but was seen continually employing his rosary in the *vodun* cere- [184] [793] monies at which he officiated. While Haitians from the southern peninsula stated that the *hungans* there do not go to church, it was pointed out at the same time that all other voduists attend regularly.

779 798 The principal resentment held by Mirebalais voduists against the Church is for the cost of Church rites, and for the

779 798 refusal to accord Church burial to certain faithful followers because of the inability of their surviving relations to pay for their funeral masses. As expressed most clearly, it is felt that the Church is expensive, exacting fees for baptisms, marriage ceremonies, and funerals, while *vodun* worship, on the other hand, costs but little: a bit of *clairin*, the animals one must sacrifice — only, however, to insure the help of the *lòa* in causing the remaining ones to increase in number — and the " presents " to be given the gods, costs the less oppressive because they are usually shared by all members of one's family. Another source of discontent is said to be the failure of the Church to adhere to its agreement in the Concordat to " Haitianize " the clergy. This has been emphasized in Mirebalais because the priest of its church is one of the relatively few in Haiti who is himself a Haitian. One of the sentiments about the Church most frequently heard during this field-work, coming as it did just at the end of the American occupation, was: "The *Garde* has finally been Haitianized. Now it is the turn of the Church."

798 648 The attitude of the Church toward *vodun* is one of intransigent hostility. The anger with which the priest preached his sermon on the Sunday morning following a *vodun* dance held close enough to town so that the sound of the drums, plainly audible, " disturbed " him the night long, clearly indicates how deeply the priests of the Church resent the worship of the African gods. In Mirebalais they tell how, at the instance of the Church, *vodun* rites were unmercifully suppressed by the Americans during the occupation, to whom it was represented as a potential focus for revolt. In the *place* huge bonfires were made of *vodun* drums painted and " dressed " in elaborate manner. Everything found in the *humforts* and the private houses of worship was confiscated, and the " thunder stones," necklaces of the devotees, and other sacred objects that would not burn were thrown into the Artibonite River. Today the Church takes full advantage 660

779 798 Today the Church takes full advantage of its status as the only recognized religious organization in Haiti to dictate the official position of government toward *vodun*. Permission for *vodun* dances and for *services* must be obtained from the officer commanding the local detachment of the Garde d'Haiti, and this is not always granted. Penalties [688] for illicit dances and ceremonies are severe, and because gossip is ubiquitous and no man lacks enemies, apprehension is prompt. Thus in the instance of one *service*, a misunderstanding regarding the permit was sufficient to cause the detention for some hours of the one responsible for the rite.

771 178 177 Is it possible, then, for a person to be a communicant of the Church and partake of the sacrament without feeling this weight of spiritual and official disapprobation? More particularly, is it possible for him to omit from his confession all allusion to his worship of "false" gods? It is here that one encounters a singularly tenacious survival of African traditional belief. In Africa the conquest of one people by another meant the mutual interchange and acceptance of the respective deities. The conquerors added to their own pantheons the gods of those whom they had overcome so that these forces might not wreak a supernatural vengeance upon them; while to the conquered the power of the gods of those who had defeated them was self-evident. If the worship of the Christian God and of the saints of the Church intruded on the aboriginal religious patterns of the Negroes brought to Haiti, the acceptance of such worship did not imply rejection of the old gods. Nor does membership in the Church today mean such complete acquiescence in its doctrines and pronouncements that the worshipper of the *loa* will offer himself for the malediction of the priest by confessing his adherence to their cult. The situation somewhat parallels that in Africa itself, where the first effort of Protestant missionaries is directed toward inducing their converts to abjure polygyny. This dictum is complied with readily enough on the surface, so that a man will have but one wife — in one village! In Haiti the

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problem of confession is met in the manner explained by a woman who is a devotee of the *loa:* " The *loa* are not the things of the priest. Why should I tell him about them? If I come and take this book of yours, it isn't mine, and I am a thief. If the priest tells me I must not worship my *loa*, they are not his *loa,* and he cannot take them from me. Does anyone expect me to come and tell him that my father, my mother, my sisters and brothers, and all my family serve the *loa*? "

For the Haitian, therefore, the forces of the universe are under dual control. And though, as has been stated when the cosmology of the system of *vodun* worship was discussed, he may reconcile this duality, yet in practice he must observe the rites of his *loa* separately; he must pray to God and the saints apart. His reconciliations he keeps to himself, and in his everyday life both the African beliefs and those of the Church have their place. No better illustration of this could be had than in the incident of the white cock named for the serpent-god Damballa, that had been spared until the final day of this field-work when, as the last of a large brood, his time had come to be killed for the table of his owner. On this afternoon, when he was " to meet his destiny," the cook took him up quietly. A number of feathers were plucked from him, and then, as the sharp knife, describing a cross, ended his life, the whispered phrase could just be heard: "*Damballa, je crois en Dieu* — Damballa, I believe in God."

CHAPTER XV

SOME WIDER IMPLICATIONS

158 No student of Haitian institutions can elude a progressively
182 sharpened awareness of the psychological conflict that is being
waged within the frame of Haitian society. And though examples of the divergent forces which lie at the root of this conflict have been set forth in the preceding chapters, some of the more important of these may be recalled here.

178 In his social relationships the Haitian is constantly exposed
182 to the demands of a code of morality which requires marriage
595 to be monogamic. Yet the African tradition of polygyny, and
158 the undoubtedly satisfactory arrangements of both an economic and a social nature that can be made under the terms
178 of plural marriage, pull him toward this form. The case is even
182 stronger in the field of religion, which in Haiti is not a thing
771 remote from life, but an intimate part of existence. On the one
158 hand, because of his inheritance of the *loa*, he must meet his obligations toward these ancestral gods of Africa who punish harshly those who fail them, so that he must either continue their traditional worship or learn to know the consequences of their anger. Yet on the other hand, the priest thunders his
[797] maledictions and threats of eternal damnation—in Mirebalais, at least, often in Creole, a language which the peasant can understand—against those of his flock, the vast majority

158 178 182 771 (197) of whom are sincere practicing vodunists as they are sincere practicing Catholics, who do not put an end to the worship of false gods.

532 178 158 182 The absence of graphic and plastic arts in Haitian culture, commented upon in a preceding chapter, must also be regarded as a case in point in laying bare the anatomy of this inner conflict of tradition, since it is important to recognize that the suppression of these forms of the prevalent African tradition would seem to have lost to the Haitian an important outlet for the resolution of inner tensions caused by pent-up drives. 525 178 158 182 Even more revealing is the substitution of games of chance for those games of skill which in most African and New World Negro societies are played for their own sake alone — that is, for the prestige accruing to the skillful player. The strain that accompanies this play for stakes, often of no inconsiderable value in terms of the resources of the players, is patent to the most casual observer. The question here arises whether or not the craving for excitement of this kind may not in Haiti be traceable to the inhibition, under slavery, of some of the more gracious forms of African life which there make for social equilibrium. Might it not represent a kind of compensation for the thwarted psychic ease with which a culturally undisturbed people approach their own existence — a state of being which, in contrast, is quite lacking in Haiti?

158 A singularly illuminating comment upon these manifestations of instability in Haitian life has been made by Dr. J. C. Dorsainvil, who in drawing his conclusion called both upon his own medical training and on his experience of many years as a profound student of his own people. " It has perhaps been insufficiently remarked to what an astonishing degree the Haitian people live on their nerves."[1] As might be expected, he advances a number of possible explanations of the causes that underlie this state of " living on nerves." The wear and tear of life in the tropics is given as one reason; another is the excitement of the *vodun* dances with their frenzy of possession;

158 while even the hypothesis of an inherited racial psychosis is proposed to account for the phenomenon.

Let us examine these suggestions. An appeal to the natural environment offers but unsure ground, since it is known that not all peoples who live in the tropics experience a comparable psychic strain. Again, if the participation in *vodun* rites and the experience of possession were given as a reason for lack of stability, it would be expected that these changes in behavior would only occur before, during, or shortly after the ceremonies themselves, something that is by no means the case; and, moreover, that this state of " living on nerves " would be shared by all Negro peoples among whom the experience of possession is the commonplace that it is in Haitian peasant religion. This brings us to the suggestion that Haitian mentality may be the product of a racial psychosis. Here it is important to stress that from the point of view of Haitian culture, as from that of Africa, possession as a part of religious experience is both normal and desirable, so that the actions of an individual in such a state are to be judged neurotic only on the basis of standards that are those of a foreign culture. Add to this the fact that it is becoming more and more apparent that skepticism is the only scientifically admissible attitude when the question of referring the behavior of any people to specific racial endowment is raised, and the necessity becomes apparent of seeking other explanations for Haitian psychology than those that have been advanced.

158 17 What, then, of this matter of " living on the nerves "? It is an arresting image for the characteristic instability of attitude and emotional expression found in the Haitian, but in attempting to understand the phenomenon, it would seem that we are on the firmest ground when we look to those historical forces which were considered in the first chapters of this book. Stated in general terms, an explanation might be sought in the influences which cultures in contact bring to bear upon the

individuals who must meet the demands of two traditions 158
which, in many aspects, are in anything but accord. As regards 17
the Haitian, it must be recognized that the two ancestral elements in his civilization have never been completely merged. As a result, his outwardly smoothly functioning life is full of inner conflict, so that he has to raise his defenses in order to make his adjustment within the historical and cultural combination of differing modes of life that constitute his civilization.

The kind of adjustment that seems to dominate may per- 154
haps best be called *socialized ambivalence*, since, more than any other phrase, it describes this tendency to manifest those rapid shifts in attitude toward people and situations that characterize the responses of the Haitian peasant to such a marked degree that the same man will hold in high regard a person, an institution, an experience, or even an object that has personal significance to him, and simultaneously manifest great disdain and even hatred for it. As outwardly observable, this takes the form of recurring and often rapid changes in behavior toward the object of attention. In attitude, there is vacillation from one emotional tone to another. In its broader implications, as a matter of fact, it is entirely possible that this socialized ambivalence underlies much of the political and economic instability of Haiti, so that, arising from a fundamental clash of custom within the culture, it is responsible for the many shifts in allegiance that continually take place, as it is for the change in attitudes in everyday association.

Since far more detailed studies of individuals must be at hand before the full power of this ambivalent drive can be gauged with any degree of sureness, the problem alone is sketched here. Yet this type of approach cannot but give insight into such occurrences as that of the man whose unwilling possession by the gods of his ancestors was, as described, brought about through the fascination of their forbidden

154 rites for him, despite his strict Catholic upbringing. His vacillation between the desire to understand and worship the gods of his ancestors and his utter remorse after he had done this illustrates one way in which conflicts in a cultural setting can affect the outward responses and unsettle the inner adjustment of the individual who is exposed to such a situation. From a broader point of view, such an analysis of Haitian psychology suggests a more realistic understanding of the individuals in other cultures who have likewise fallen heir to conflicting traditions.

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182 However revealing this type of analysis of the springs of Haitian behavior may prove, it will be adding only a fragment of esoteric information unless it, like all other aspects of the investigation of this single society and its mode of life, is pointed toward an understanding of the larger problems of the relation between man and his culture. For just as a study of the effect of the dual character of Haitian behavior upon the personality of the Haitians is important in throwing light on the study of the relationship between culture and personality in general, so the study of Haitian institutions may hold equal significance when questions are raised about the less subjective aspects of human civilization — that is, when attempts are made to understand what may be termed the dynamics of culture.

197 Most important in this connection is the demonstration made in this book how cultures in contact influence each other. This would seem self-evident but for the fact that very generally when such a proposition has been stated, it rarely enters into the actual studies of primitive cultures in contact with European civilizations without being neutralized by a counter-assumption that the force of European achievement overwhelms peoples with a differing cultural heritage. As will be seen, the failure to recognize this fact of the reciprocal effects of cultural contacts has entered to a very significant degree into the determination of basic atti-

tudes governing Negro-white relationships in this country at the present time.

Haiti has experienced as long and perhaps as intensive a degree of exposure to European influences as any area where non-Europeans have lived in contact with European patterns of life. It has, in addition, completely passed through initial and secondary periods of contact into a state where the social milieu represents more than a century of consolidation of the original influences. Yet the Haitian Negro has by no means been overwhelmed by European tradition, just as he has not retained his aboriginal African heritage without any change. The process is seen to be one of selection, of working over, of revamping and recombining the elements of the contributing cultures, with the result that the ensuing combinations, though of recognizable derivation, differ from their aboriginal forms.

More problems of general interest are also pointed and illustrated by the material from Haiti. One assumption often made in viewing the course of cultural change is that the intangible aspects of a culture are less prone to give way before foreign influences than are its technological and economic aspects. The "natural" conservatism of religion and social organization is often particularly stressed in contrast with the relatively greater tendency to change shown by tools and weapons, clothing, housing, and utensils of various sorts. And though such assertions have some basis in fact, as both our own culture and the cultures of numerous other folk show, yet in the material on Haiti it is clear that neither in technology nor in economic organization have the traditions of Europe entirely prevailed over those of Africa, nor are they in any sense absent in the fields of social organization, religion, music, and dancing. It would seem that while a certain hospitality to European concepts and customs is apparent, there has at the same time been a retention of African modes of life in all sectors of Haitian culture to a degree which

177 suggests that generalizations as to the relative pliability of
178 any specific phases of a culture under exposure to another are premature.

562 Are women more conservative than men in respect to
178 cultural change? The appropriateness of the affirmative answer often given can be tested to advantage in studies such as this. The answer, in Haiti, would seem to be that where work at home shields women from the influences of the outer world, this conservatism is found, but where they have an opportunity to come into contact with new trends, no less change enters into their activities than into that of the men. Thus in such matters as the organization of the Haitian household, the cuisine, or the time of meals, the logic of the situation has caused women to preserve Africanisms in full vigor, while historical causes have also similarly aided them in such things as retaining their African role as traders in the markets. In other phases of their lives, however, women, like men, have accepted European patterns, as is evidenced in the field of religion, where no greater resistance has been shown by women toward new forms than by men.

182 Other examples might be cited, but these indicate how a culture such as that of Haiti, as regards both its inner values and the psychological responses made to them, and its outer form and the manner in which its present-day character was attained, aids in sharpening and clarifying the questions that must be asked and answered if a better grasp of the dynamics of custom and the way in which tradition plays upon the inner being of those who are its carriers is to be had. However, it is not alone in general considerations such as these that the study of Haitian life can be of use. Much that is perplexing in that particular facet of the problem of race which in America is termed the "Negro problem" has both analogy and contrast in Haitian life. It must not be forgotten that the slaves who were brought to continental America were of the same types and of the same background as those imported

into other parts of the New World. Consequently a knowledge of the strains which came to Haiti, of the manner in which they met the situation they found there, and of how the cultural influences that played upon them have worked out in terms of patterns of behavior, should throw light on the way in which American Negroes have met, and are meeting, their own social situation. 182

Thus the study of Haiti offers contributions of particular value in examining the nature and accuracy of underlying attitudes held toward Negroes by non-Negroes, and the attitudes of Negroes toward themselves. One example is the widespread belief about the quality of the cultures from which the slaves were drawn. This holds that the African peoples who contributed the slave populations to the New World were "savages" whose civilizations were of a lower order than that to which the slaves were introduced. Obviously this view is a natural by-product of European ethnocentrism, but its many repetitions have persuaded the Negroes to accept it completely. Nevertheless, the material in the preceding chapters shows that this concept is anything but valid; that the regions of Africa from which slaves were derived comprise the area where the high cultures of the continent existed, where complex social and political organizations and high forms of religion and art were and are to be found; that their rank, if cultures can be ranked, would rather be with Europe of the Middle Ages than with the most simple societies of nonliterate folk. In addition, investigation into Haitian history has pointed out that of these populations it was not necessarily the deficient who made up the slave cargoes. Despite the widespread acceptance of this notion — among Negroes, again, no less than among whites — it has been seen that a considerable proportion of the slaves were upper-class Africans; that at the very least the slave population represented an adequate cross-section of the societies from which its members were derived.[4] 17 182

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Another deep-lying source of the attitude taken toward the Negro concerns his supposed readiness to suffer his slave status. To find the assertion that the Negro is a born servitor, best adapted to caring for those of a higher order in the biological world, it is not necessary to search among the statements of those who, before the Civil War, issued variations on this theme in support of their position. Yet otherwise why did the Negro accept his slave status to the extent to which he did? And, further, just how great was that acceptance? Again, in analyzing the material from Haiti, light is thrown on both questions. Slavery as an institution was one of the few patterns of his new life that rang familiar to past experience, for, as has been seen, slavery—and not necessarily household slavery, but that of the plantation variety which prevailed in the New World—was deeply ingrained in African tradition. Even then, once in the New World, certainly in Haiti and to a far greater extent than is ordinarily grasped elsewhere in the region where slaving prevailed, his acquiescence in his new status was but briefly held, if at all. The tale of slave revolts, beginning but a few years after the original introduction of slaves into Hispaniola and continuing there and elsewhere in the Caribbean, the Guianas, and North and South America until the abolition of slavery, has yet to be told. When it is realized that these rebellions were intermittent throughout the period and took place everywhere in the region; that they resulted in freedom for the Maroons of Jamaica and for the slaves who escaped from the plantations of Haiti before the French were expelled from the island, and in the eventual attainment of independence by the Haitians and, *de facto*, by the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana; and that everywhere they held the white population in terror of life and property, the significance of these episodes as pointing the error of current concepts concerning the inner make-up of the Negro is patent. Add to this the revolts of slaves in the barracoons of Africa itself, and on board the ships which brought them to the New World — "revolt insurance" was often carried by the masters of slave-ships — and the demonstration of the falsity of this concept of the Negro as a born slave is complete. 15 56?

These ideas, however, are fundamental to the Negro problem as it exists at the present time. Admittedly, it is no simple matter to change points of view so generally held, especially when to the weight of economic drives is added the force exerted by the depth in tradition at which they lie. Nevertheless, when current attempts to solve the "Negro problem" come to mind, one is struck by the slight attention paid to such factors as these. Simple solutions, rapid in their operation, are almost invariably sought and inevitably rejected when immediate resolution of the difficulty is not forthcoming. Does it perhaps occur, again pointing lessons derived from the Haitian material, that there are forces of unrecognized power at work which derive from the elementary fact not only that, as has been stated, cultures in contact influence one another, but that in contact they exhibit far greater tenacity than is ordinarily credited them?

The cultural heritage of the African, it has been seen, was not a negligible one. In the entire area from which Africans were drawn it was of sufficient unity so that the differences between the behavior of peoples was but a gloss on the deeper resemblances between their traditions. The slaves were brought to the New World, North America as elsewhere, in great numbers, so that many persons from the same tribes remained in contact with each other. Even though this were not the case, no insuperable linguistic barriers existed. For as with cultures, so with languages; though mutually unintelligible, they were so based on the same grammatical constructions, and so presented the same idiomatic expressions, that the language of the masters spoken in the old patterns sufficed to preserve and hand on the traditions of the forefathers.

What of the belief in the United States that nothing of

Africa remains? That this has the widest currency needs no explanation, nor, again, that it is held as true by Negroes as by whites. Indeed, any demonstration to the contrary invariably meets with remonstrance, while indications that Africanisms have even invaded white patterns of behavior are received with incredulity. This reaction is understandable enough if it is referred to the other belief already mentioned concerning the "savage" nature of aboriginal Negro background. Yet despite popular acceptance, despite "scientific" pronouncements that Negro music, Negro speech, Negro games, and Negro folk-beliefs stem from European sources, the student who is equipped with a background of African custom and West Indian practice can see the essential unsoundness of such claims. Cultures do not entirely give way one before another, even where the one was carried by slaves and the other by masters; even though the one is separated from its source by thousands of miles and hundreds of years, and the other derives a continuous renewal of vitality from constant contact with its original home. Once again reference [177] to Haiti is to be made: to the fact that in economic life, in [178] social organization, in religion, in music and dance, Africa has not disappeared, nor, at the same time, have the influences from France failed to stamp themselves on present-day behavior. Cannot the same be said of all areas of the New World where Negroes are gathered in great numbers?[3]

These questions can only be raised here; their answer is the matter of long years of patient investigation yet ahead. But may it not be true that the Negro in the United States has preserved some vestiges of his aboriginal heritage even in outward institutionalized forms; that in his attitudes, points of view, and characteristic responses to social situations the factors of his dual heritage have not been entirely lost; and, as would follow elsewhere as it has followed in Haiti, that this may be reflected in his resulting personality types? Even the possibility of affirmative answers strongly suggests that further invstigation of these matters may point the surest road toward racial understanding and toward eventually alleviating the trains that exist between the Negro and white groups in the population.

Great care must be exercised, however, if the implications of the point regarding the tenaciousness of Negro civilization —which has everywhere in the New World permitted the crrying over of a far greater number of African beliefs, traitions, and modes of behavior than is ordinarily conceived ossible — for the practical problems of Negro-white relaions are to be explored, the more so since the urgency of this roblem rarely permits discussion of Negro peoples and their ustomary behavior to achieve detachment. It seems timely, herefore, to enter here a note of caution against the uses to hich findings pointing to such a conclusion are reported as eing made by those who are proponents of programs of acion rather than seekers after knowledge.

Disconcertingly enough, it is those holding extreme opinons concerning the Negro who sense the opportunity to olster their particular theses by reference to the fact that fricanisms have been retained in the New World. On the lft, the point of view taken conceives the Negroes of the Inited States as a subject "nation," whose true freedom and ull citizenship may come only after the establishment of an autonomous Black Republic in the South shall have permitted the fulfillment of the inherent genius of this people. What better theoretical base for such a program could be found than in material which seems to show that American Negroes, under their skins, are but Africans whose suppressed racial tendencies will, when released, furnish the drive needed for working out their own destiny? At the same time, those on the extreme right, who urge social and economic segregation for the American Negro, also vindicate their position by contemplating the Africanisms retained in American Negro life. Is this not evidence, they say, of the inability of the

Negro to assimilate white culture to any workable degree, and should not Negroes therefore be encouraged to develop their own peculiar "racial" gifts — always, that is, within the bounds of the Negro's "place"?

Neither conclusion is in the least justified. To say that American and New World Negroes have retained certain African patterns of behavior and certain African aspects of belief within a varying range is not to suggest that in this country, for example, they have not assimilated American culture. They have, in fact, assimilated it to the degree that their opportunities have permitted, as have all other folk whose ancestors were not indigenous to this country — which is to say, of course, as have all peoples of the United States with the single exception of the American Indians. It is not counted as strange that the descendants of the British colonists now living in New England should have retained certain speech or food habits of England; nor that the city of Milwaukee, whose population is predominantly German-American, should have a flavor that is a carry-over of the culture of Germany; nor that the special traditions brought by Italian and Scandinavian and Jewish and Polish and other groups should not have entirely given way before the patterns that characterize the culture of the country as a whole. In all these groups, parents have both consciously and unconsciously handed down their knowledge, beliefs, and habits of motor behavior to their children, which is precisely what is meant, and all that is meant, when it is pointed out that the Negro's heritage from the cultures of Africa has not been entirely lost. And from this it follows, and follows emphatically, that any distinctively African traits of behavior retained by the Negroes cannot be claimed to make him a unique phenomenon; this merely marks him as a group no different from all the others that go to make up the citizenry of the United States.

Thus, just as in Haiti the Negroes once free were at liberty to work out their culture in such terms as the logic of their

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background impelled, so elsewhere in the New World to varying degrees the same process has been operative. In the study of these situations as they are found at present, then, and especially in the study of the culture of Haiti as it has developed over the years since independence was achieved, clues may be available not only for a clearer understanding of the processes of culture as a whole, but also to point the way toward a more fundamental approach to the immediate problems of race as they are found in the New World, thus at once furthering the ends of scientific understanding and a more satisfactory social adjustment.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX I

THE GODS OF THE VODUN PANTHEON

ONE of the most impressive facts about studies of Haitian 776
peasant belief is the absence of any attempt at systematic treat- 114
ment of the deities of the *vodun* cult, as concerns either their attributes, their functions, or their relationship to one another. Indeed, there are but two exceptions to this statement; Dorsainvil (I, pp. 174–5) has published a list of the names of gods, placing them in categories according to their African derivations, and Parsons (I, *passim*) has made available her notes on the characteristics of the deities of which she was told while working in the island. Otherwise, one reads merely of "the serpent-god Damballa," or of "Papa Ogun," or some other isolated designation. It therefore seemed of capital im- [121]
portance in making this study to obtain both names of deities and as much information concerning these gods as possible, and the resulting data are presented here.

One reason why perhaps not more of such "systematic the- 776
ology" of *vodun* as exists has been made available is the great 184
degree of individual variation which confronts the student 794
seeking this kind of information, since differences of opinion are invariably encountered. Even priests do not by any means [793]
agree, for these men and women are supreme individualists, each being the worshipper of particular deities and exploiting special skills, with the result that the frame of reference within

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(093)

which a given priest operates differs from that of his colleagues — though, of course, always within the limitations set by the general pattern of the cult.

This range of opinion cannot be better illustrated than by giving, at the outset, three of the lists of *vodun* deities that were obtained, since here only so simple a matter is involved as names of gods. These lists, it must be remarked, were given by people living in the same valley; were they to be compared with lists collected from other parts of the island even greater disparities would appear, as will be evident if the collection of names of *loa* given by Dorsainvil is consulted. Certain deities, whose names recur below and are also to be found in Dorsainvil's list and in Parsons' notes would be included in any enumeration of gods of the cult, since their worship prevails throughout Haiti. Such would be Legba, Damballa, Aida Wedo, Aizan, Ogun, Agwe, Loko, Shango, Ossange, Bosu, Simbi, Wangol, Baron Samedi, Gede, and Erzilie. Others, though not enjoying as widespread a following, are worshipped over large areas. A number, however, either are gods that have resulted from the process of deifying the souls of those who, in a given locality, were renowned for their spiritual power, or represent survivals of regional African deities that have been preserved in certain large family groups.

Turning now to the lists themselves, the first of these was obtained from a woman functionary of the cult. A single asterisk after a name indicates that its exact counterpart is found in the second list presented here, while two asterisks show the precise name was included in the third listing.

Rada	*Pétro*
Damballa Wedo**	Pétro
Aizan Damballa**	Bosu Trois Cornes*
Aida Wedo	Bosu Djo
Ogun Galloné	Gedeonsu*
Ogun Ferraille* **	'Ti Kita Demembré*
Ogun Balandjo* **	'Ti Jean pié sèche*

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Ogun Sabaho
Legba Avardra
Mon Loa
Solugui
Azao Comble (*or* Coumbe)
Azao Pemba*
Ashade Bokor
Agasu Wedo
Agasu Djeme
Shango
Nago Shango
Acque Fer
Golimé
Agwe Woyo*
Agwesi (*his son*)
Agweta (*his daughter*)
Kadia Bosu
Sobo
Taureau

Congo Zandor* **
Congo Savanne
Congo Wangol
Congo Guinée
Erzilie Mapiangle*
Erzilie Gé rouge* **
Simbi Proméné*
Simbi troi' zilé*
Simbi Wangol
Simbi en Deux Eaux* **
Simbi Galloné
Bakala Baka (*or* Babako Baka)
Lemba Zahou
Bumba*
Gran' Alouba
Gran' Agersi
Gran' Siligbo**
Maît' d'habitation
Maît' Carrefour** (*called* Louis di' fils)
Mari boben
Nangovi
Nangozén
Pélécon*
Ossange Batagri
Ossange Batala
Maît' Mapou (*called* Garçon Mgampé)
Maît' des Eaux
Clairmé
Mme. Clairmé
Clairmézine
Maît' Baleine (Cong' la Mè')

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The second list was given by a woman prominent in the worship of the *loa;* the deities in the preceding list whose names were also included in this (that is, those that were marked with a single asterisk) are not given here, but a double asterisk indicates, as before, that they are also found in the third list.

Rada

Damballa-Aida-Wedo**
Maît' Damballa
Maît' Aizan
Ogun Batagri**
Général Ogun
Legba grand-chemin
Legba nan barrière
Legba Maît' 'bitation
Maît' Azaou
Maît Ashade
Maît' Bokor
Maît' Agasu
Agweta Woyo
Sobo-Bade
Papa Pierre
Gran' Alouba
Gran' Aguera
Gran' nan Canari (*or* Gosen)
Général Malugué
Lt. Général Jean Baptiste
Gran' Erzilie
Erzilie Freda Dahomey
Maît' Ossange**
Maît' Batala

Pétro

Jean Pétro
Bosu d'l'eaux
Maît' Bosu
Gedenibo**
Gedeou
Maît' Clairmé
Fille Clairmé
Lemba**
Seli-ho

The third list is that given by a minor functionary of the *vodun* cult, known for his ability as a leader of songs. In ad-

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dition to the *loa* marked with doubled asterisks above, the deities he named were:

Rada	*Pétro*
Aizan	Kita
Aizan Marché	Erzilie
Aizan Marché loko	Papa Simbi
Ogun d'l'eaux	Simbi Gran' Bois
Ogun Batala	Simbi Cimitière
Ogun Ashade	Simbi caille moin
Papa Ogun	Simbi Carrefour
Papa Agasu	Simbi Kita
Agasu Tèmèré	Simbi Magie
Siligbo en bas d'l'eaux	Simbi Pétro
Siligbo Vavou	Simbi Macaya
Loko Kisigwé	Gran' Bois
Loko Yai	Baron Samedi
Pa Loko	Gran' Siligbo
Marassa Nundé	
Loa Créole	
Dahomey Freda	

Some of the inconsistencies and individual variations in the naming of the gods as demonstrated in these lists may be specified. Outstanding are the differences found in the manner of naming a single god, as when Général Ogun is called Ogun Galloné or Papa Ogun, or when Aizan Damballa is listed as two *loa*, Maît' Damballa and Maît' Aizan. Lack of agreement, however, is manifested in other ways. Though Taureau is given as a Rada god, during one *vodun* dance for the Rada deities, when a man was possessed by this *loa*, he was quickly led away and brought out of his possession, since Taureau, regarded by the group giving the dance as a Pétro deity, could not properly come to a rite for gods of another "company." Or again, whereas the second list names Maît' Ossange and Maît' Batala as Rada *loa*, the first list places them

776 794 184 in the Pétro group. The Erzilie gods are put in both categories, while Gran' Siligbo, designated in the first list as Pétro, was assigned to both " companies " by the person who gave the third list, and named as a Rada deity by the one who gave the second. Furthermore, the third list, that of the singer, comprises *loa* whose " names " are undoubtedly the result of the acceptance by this man of certain phrases from his songs as valid designations of gods, especially such names as " Aizan Marché Loko " or " Loko Kisigwé." It is not without interest to speculate on this as a possible mechanism by means of which new names are added to the *vodun* pantheon.

Only one of the lists specifically assigned gods to other than the Rada and Pétro categories. One of these was termed *Guinée* and included the following names of deities:

Kaplaou
Enwizo
Wangol
Congo
Loa Sinegal
Cangaron

The other was the Ibo group, accorded two names, the Loa Mondongue and a *loa* named Ibo Lélé.

776 More variable, however, than classifications of the *loa* are accounts of attributes and interrelationships, and details of their worship. Yet certain traits and functions of the gods and aspects of their ritual can be set forth. One way in which [533] the Haitians determine such matters is by reference to the songs sung in honor of the gods. Again and again the texts of such songs were cited as authority, suggesting that they are the " holy word " of *vodun* theology and an important device in stabilizing the details of belief. The attributes of the gods which follow are the result of extended discussions with folk who possessed all degrees of knowledge of the details of the cult and who were all active participants in it.

Legba, guardian of the crossroads, the highway, and the *barrière*, the entrance to every house, yard, or garden, is one of the most important *vodun* deities. He is generally conceived

as a limping old man, clad in tatters, but in his several mani- 776
festations has more specific characteristics. Thus Legba Pié
Cassé is described as having paralyzed legs, with arms held
stiff and crooked before him, and Legba Avardra is spoken
of as a *vagabond* who continually wanders the principal high-
ways. Legba must first be summoned before any ceremony
may begin, and when it was asked how Legba could be ex-
pected to come when called simultaneously to three or four or
twenty or fifty places, the parallel given was that of the multi-
ple manifestations of which God or Christ or a saint is capable.
Legba, identified with St. Anthony, has Tuesday as his sacred
day, and the plum tree is reserved for him. He "eats" a vari- 776
colored type of cock known as *poule zinga*, marked like a 782
guinea-fowl, and in this differs from other gods who must
indicate through a possessed devotee or a diviner what specific
offering among the things they favor is wanted on the occa-
sion of each sacrifice. Though in southern Haiti the smallest [184]
chick from each hatching is reserved for Legba, and at least
once during his lifetime a man puts aside a bullock or a
male goat as a sacrifice for this god, these customs do not pre-
vail in Mirebalais. Here, when an offering to the gods is in
prospect, Legba is included among the *loa* to whom a certain
animal is promised, and, as in the case of other deities, this
animal is thereafter under his protection. But this is the near-
est approach to any special offerings for this god.

Damballa, an important Rada god whose symbol is the ser- 776
pent, is said to bring rain because they sing "*Damballa nan* [821]
l'eau — Damballa in the water." The sacred color of this [822]
deity, worn by devotees under possession, is white, and the
full initiates wear white necklaces as well as white clothing.
This god, identified with St. Patrick, is especially worshipped [782]
on Thursdays, and shares the white fig tree with Erzilie and
Gran' Siligbo. Damballa "eats" sacrifices of white chickens
and pigeons, rice, milk, eggs, pineapples, and fig-bananas;
and "drinks" *kola* and sweetened coffee. Damballa forms the [821]

776 [821] rainbow, and this is called an *arc d'alliance* between him and Aida Wedo, his wife, whose characteristic dress is blue and [171] white. Sobo, who in Dahomey is the god of thunder, is also believed in Haiti to give thunder, though he is not thought to live in the sky. As in Africa, his symbol is the ram. Aizan lives in the water, and is a favored deity because he gives his devotees the power of healing and of divining.

Erzilie, a *loa* of considerable importance, is envisaged as a pale, trembling woman who also inhabits the water. She constantly changes her dresses, of which she has many. All agree that she is a fabulously wealthy woman, who wears golden chains about her neck and has many rings, a characterization derived from her identification with Mater Dolorosa, whose chromolithographs depict her with many rich ornaments. As a Rada *loa* she "eats" the same food as Damballa, and wears white, like this other god, but has Friday as her sacred day. In her less pleasant manifestation of Erzilie Gé Rouge, the red-eyed one, she is a member of the Pétro "squad," and is held to be the wife of Simbi d'l'eau, with whom she is believed to get on especially well, since they "eat" different foods. Simbi, who is worshipped on Tuesdays and inhabits the mango and calabash trees, is said to drink heavily, however, and occasionally becomes so boistrous in his cups that he destroys the furniture and otherwise makes himself so objectionable that Erzilie is forced to leave him until he becomes sober.

[171] Ogun, in Haiti as in Nigeria, is the god of war. The Nigerian Shango is also found, though the Haitians conceive Shango as a *loa* who acts as the servant of the Ogun deities, [782] particularly Ogun Badagri and Ogun Batala. Ogun "eats" [822] red cocks and red beans mixed with rice, and his color, red, is worn by his devotees. To this fact may be referred the custom [114] of the Caco warriors who fought against the American Ma- [648] rines in 1918–20 to wear red as their distinguishing color, something referred to by Wirkus (pp. 22 ff.), though he

combines an explanation having an element of correctness — "a charm against harm" — with entire misunderstanding when he speaks of the color as symbolizing a "declaration of a holy war against wrong and oppression." Some, but not all of the Ogun *loa* drink Haitian rum. Ogun himself is identified with St. James the Elder, and his sacred day is Wednesday. This *loa* is a *Nèg défence* and protects his worshippers from bullets or wounds inflicted by weapons. Ogun Balandjo guards travelers, though he is not as strong as such others of the Ogun group as Ogun Badagri and Ogun Batala, with whom he shares the bamboo tree as a habitation. The former gives *connaissance* — knowledge — which permits those he possesses to prohesy; the latter endows with the ability to prepare healing baths. The Ogun *loa* Ezilie and Damballa are jealous gods. On the day sacred to each, a devotee puts fresh linen on his bed, places powder, soap, and a comb near by, and sleeps alone. If the devotee is a woman, her husband sleeps elsewhere; if a man, his wife must seek another place; otherwise the transgressor would die.

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Agwe Woyo is god of the sea, but, as might be expected, neither he nor his son and daughter, Agweto and Agweta Woyo, figures as importantly in Mirebalais as in coastal areas. For the folk of Mirebalais the river-gods, particularly the spirit of the Artibonite River, are of much greater importance. This last-mentioned *loa*, named Clairmé, a Pétro deity like his wife and daughter, Mme. Clairmé and Clairmézine, lives in the deepest part of the stream with the other members of his "family." Similarly, the deepest parts, or *bassins*, of tributary streams hold the spirits of those waters. And since all these tributaries flow into the Artibonite, and the Artibonite empties into the ocean, it is said that when the river is in flood, Clairmé is engaged in inspecting his domain, being greeted by the spirits of all the smaller rivers as he passes their mouths. At this time the flow of the water in each tributary is arrested until he has gone by, when, in a great swirl,

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776 823 it joins the flooded Artibonite as its master accompanies Clairmé on his way to consult with the great ruler of the sea, Agwe. Actually, at the height of the rainy season the force of the light colored muddy water of the major stream holds back the darker colored flow of its tributaries in a manner which accords with the legend, so that, observing the Tombe River at one such time, the Haitians who were present said: "The Tombe is waiting for its master to pass."

776 [184] [774] Gede, a deity who figures in both the Rada and the Pétro groups as chief functionary under Baron Samedi, ruler of cemeteries, is tolerated rather than favored, though his rewards to his devotees include the refusal to dig a permanent grave for them. [781] When Gede possesses a devotee at a dance, Damballa, Ogun, and the other Rada gods "leave" at once, and those who are possessed by them come out of their possessions. For though Gede is no less a *loa* than other gods, "He is a *zombi* and is fed apart"; as the Haitians say: "The *loa* are like human beings. They will not mingle with the dead, [822] and Gede is of the dead." His color is black, and Saturday is his sacred day. [782] He "eats" s[illegible]erring, hot peppers, cassava, roasted corn, roasted bananas, and other roasted foods. He drinks *clairin* — much of it — and at great ceremonies a [825] black goat and chickens are killed for him, as well as those chickens with ruffled feathers called *djakati*, which in all the New World, as in Africa, are believed to discover and dig up magic charms set against their owners. He lives in the cemetery, "behind the cross." There are a number of deities whose names are compounded with the name of Gede — Gedenibo, Gedeconsu, Gedefun — and hence the question whether or not this is a generic term or a specific designation is pertinent. There is no agreement on this point, and it could only be established that those *loa* who bear the same name, such as all Ogun or Bosu or Simbi deities, are brothers; but who the parents of these groups may have been is not known.

Associated with Simbi and Gede in the Pétro "squad" are

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the various forms of Bosu and 'Ti Kita. Some hold that Bosu lives in the mountains and the cemeteries, but not in the water; others state that he does not live in the mountains, but in the water and on the plain. As a matter of fact, there is a Bosu of the water, and there would also seem to be one of the plain, of the crossroads, and of the mountains, each with its own name. 'Ti Kita, conceived as a woman, is also associated with the cult of magic and the dead. She is "fed" a goat, which is almost invariably referred to as Maria Louisa, or Louisa.

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APPENDIX II

SOME COMMENTS ON METHOD

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THE MATERIAL presented in this book was gathered during the summer of 1934, when an expedition was arranged that made it possible for Mrs. Herskovits and myself to spend a little more than three months in Mirebalais. For so comparatively short a stay, it was particularly advantageous to have two persons carry on the work, each of whom brought to the study of Haitian culture a background of experience with related Negro civilizations in the New World and in West Africa. This enabled the study to begin at a point of considerable familiarity with the underlying sanctions of Haitian institutions.

According to plan, the investigation was concentrated in a restricted region. It therefore follows that unless explicitly stated, all references to custom and belief in this book have bearing only upon the folk of the valley where the study was conducted. No sweeping generalizations for all of Haiti are to be deduced, for regional variations do exist and are of no little importance in suggesting African tribal differences in custom which have been retained because of the African tradition of cultural autonomy for separate localities.

The greatest disadvantage of a short field-study is that the resulting picture of the culture must of necessity be a seasonal one. No first-hand description of the important festivities that

mark the New Year, the time of harvest, All Saints' Day, or 114
Easter can be given; on the other hand, the accounts of those 121
portions of the agricultural cycle that take place during the rainy season, especially the operations of the important co-operative work-groups, could be followed carefully. In the field of religion, good fortune and a friendly entrée, the harvest of many months spent in field-work among Negro peoples elsewhere, but above all in Guinée — Africa — afforded invitations to a number of private ceremonies that might occur at any season. And the same background, together with the insatiable interest of the Negro in the nature and the functioning of his gods, made for such detailed discussions of native theological concept and philosophical point of view as could not have been bettered no matter what the time of year.

In the field, the procedure followed in earlier investiga- 122
tions was continued; a house was found in the village where it 124
was possible to settle down and quietly observe life as it drifted past the door. A number of acquaintances became habitual visitors, and these, together with those others whose services as interpreters were needed, especially in the early days of the stay when the understanding of Créole and the ability to converse in it were limited, constituted those to whom questions were most frequently put or to whom happenings that had been observed were referred for clarification. Agreement on all points, or any point, in fact, bearing either on belief or ritual observance was by no means invariably found, but soundness of method in the study of culture must recognize that there are no "correct" answers to questions of custom; and that the acceptance of the fact of individual differences of behavior and point of view within the general framework of a given set of traditions is the only valid approach to the realities of human civilization.

Obviously, not all the material presented here is the result 123
of first-hand observation, for much insight can be derived 124
from the method of question and answer when carefully used

123 124 with a native resident of the locality that is being studied. A great deal was observed, but observation is at best a matter of chance, as, for example, in the matter of birth-customs, which were not witnessed because no birth occurred in a family with whom close relations had been established, as against the ritual of death, where information was checked through observation when a death occurred in the family of friends. If observation alone were relied upon for authentic information, no rounded picture of any culture could be achieved much short of a lifetime of effort. It is entirely possible for an ethnographer who is conversant with the outlines of the culture of a given society to check statements made to him against their probability in terms of the inner logic of the culture he is studying; it is even a simpler matter to obtain independent statements concerning the same facet of behavior and to discover whether, allowing for variations within the logic of the culture, a given explanation or description of a certain custom is to be accepted as valid. There is no question that suspicion or misunderstanding of purpose is the cause of the passing on of much misinformation; but it is remarkable how often, if the student knows patience and does not attempt to probe the most secret phases of a culture during the initial period of his stay, a misleading or evasive explanation given in the early days will later be corrected voluntarily as "a mistake."

123 Much nonsense has been written about the need for the student of the customs of a people to become a "participant observer" of those customs, by doing what, in common parlance, is termed "going native." This may be feasible among some folk — in the South Seas, perhaps — but let it be stated emphatically that this is neither possible nor of benefit among West African Negroes and their New World Negro descendants. There is no tradition that is more deeply shared among them than that of the importance of valuing individual iden-

tity in the scheme of things. Implicit in this is a sense of dignity that does not permit a man to escape the dictates set by any caste lines that may be drawn. The ethnographer, again, especially if he be a white man, has what has been called a high degree of social visibility, and any attempt to live according to the canons of native life would forthwith expose him to the thrusts of a deadly weapon in the hands of the Negro, the weapon most destructive of that mutual respect that is the basis for all free and friendly intercourse between two human beings, whatever their race — ridicule. In Negro cultures the white student must be content to remain what he actually is, an observer. He can and must be, if his work is to be of real worth, a sympathetic observer, and given patience, tact, and sincerity, he will form warm friendships among the native folk after he comes to know them well, so that as a friend it will not be denied him to share with them their inner values. It is on this basis that the work reported on in this volume was carried out. 123

Another aspect of method is implicit in the form in which the field material has been presented in this book. Studies such as this, concerned with a people whose ascertainable past history shows the effect of first-hand, continued contact between two cultures, have in recent years come to be termed *acculturation studies*. Investigations of this sort differ from those of a more conventional type in that they not only recognise and stress the fact that contact between peoples is basic to human life; but on the assumption that all cultures, no matter how remote or primitive, reflect this fact, frankly take as their material the customs of societies where the technology, habits, and beliefs are the result of definitely ascertainable historic contacts. For this approach holds that if a competent analysis is made of the base-line from which the process of change in a given society took its beginnings, and if the effects of the applications of these stimuli are carefully recorded, a more pre- 121 cise determination of the dynamics of cultural change and the inner relationship of cultural elements will be possible than can come from the use of any other method.

It is not suggested that other approaches to these problems have not made their contributions of importance, nor that they will not in the future continue to aid in throwing light on the difficult questions relating to the nature of culture and its interaction with its human carriers. But those who are devoting themselves to the discovery of historical processes through "reconstructions" of the movements of peoples and cultures tend to neglect the inner relationships that give to a culture the significance it has for those who live under it. In similar fashion, those who abjure history and devote themselves to the analyses of the interrelationships and functioning of the elements of a single remote "simple" society are handicapped by the static nature of their approach, by their neglect of the basic principle that every culture is a unique historical continuum, and by their resulting naïveté in the face of cultural change.

The gap between these positions is filled by the study of acculturation. If this approach be considered from the side of cultural dynamics, it is seen that of all who study primitive societies, the student of acculturation alone works under the conditions of control afforded by reference to recorded history. On the other hand, he is also in a strategic position to study the interrelationship between the elements of a given culture and the manner in which the functioning whole influences the individuals who live under it. For how better analyze the mechanisms of culture than under those conditions where, to varying degrees, forces that are known entities rather than hypothetical reconstructions have been operative or are actually at work? How better attack the difficult problems of the inner relationships between the elements of a given culture and their influence on the human psyche than in those situations where the psychological stresses and strains incident upon culture-change enable the student to observe, under conditions of known historical control, the results of changes in settled habits and belief and behavior? 121

Foremost among the considerations that present themselves in this connection is that of the value of utilizing historical documentation as an aid in the study of culture. This has general relevance, since the obliviousness of students of primitive societies to historical records bearing upon the peoples they study is a commonplace, while no less so is the failure of historians adequately to treat the information they uncover about primitive peoples in the records through which they have worked. In a sense, this is neither surprising nor blameworthy. Each group has its own techniques, so that just as the ethnologist is not competent as an archivist, in like manner the historian finds it difficult both to assess the value of information concerning primitive folk, and to present it so that its greatest usefulness may be realized. 121 127

In studying Haitian culture, however, the employment of both historical and ethnological data is almost mandatory. The serious errors that a lack of both kinds of background has given rise to cannot be overlooked, matters so fundamental as the names of African tribes given the slaves in the early historical sources being an important case in point. Thus, the term *Caplahou*, a geographical one, is given as a tribal designation in a number of modern works, while elsewhere the Ibo are listed as a Nago sub-tribe, quite without realization that the Ibo and Yoruban Nago not only are separated by a considerable distance, but that in their cultural affiliations they differ widely. More striking, and more amusing, is the translation of the word *marassa* given by one popularizer who, lacking knowledge of the existence of the twin cult in Africa, rendered it as "the spirit of the race." 121 127 114

On the other hand, attempts to interpret Haitian culture without reference to historical documentation have also been subject to unfortunate errors. Significant here are the failures 121 127

121 to recognize that many of the condemned traits of Haitian
127 culture ascribed to innate Negro characteristics actually represent retentions of the patterns of the pre-Revolutionary masters of the island. In the combination of the two disciplines, then — the utilization of available historical sources concerning a people to aid in an understanding of their ethnology, and the use of material derived from the study of present-day primitive folk to aid the historian in evaluating and elucidating his findings — the potentialities of this dual approach are evident in this study of the forces behind Haitian acculturation, and its results.

121 Attention may finally be called to the range of problems inherent in the phenomenon of socialized ambivalence marking so much of Haitian psychology, whose attack should add to an understanding of the influence of culture upon the formation of personality. For evidently those situations where acculturation is continuing or has constituted a factor of importance in the ascertainable historic past of a people afford many more searching leads than those others where a stable, "uncontaminated" series of cultural patterns create far fewer problems of adjustment and maladjustment.

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APPENDIX III

NOTES ON THE TEXT

(Citations to sources give only the last name of the author, and a large roman numeral in parentheses following a name indicates that more than one title published by this writer has been used as a reference; as: "Dorsainvil (II)." Volume numbers of works in more than one volume are indicated by small roman numerals; as: "St. Mery, ii." The arabic numerals which follow are page designations.)

INTRODUCTION

[1] St. Mery, ii, 229.
[2] Ibid., 238–9; Charlevoix, ii, 414–22.
[3] St. Mery, loc. cit.
[4] Ibid., ii, 237–8.
[5] Stoddard, Ch. X, XII.
[6] Edwards, iii, 84.
[7] St. John, 41–2; Ardouin, 20–1; de Vaissière, 567.
[8] Mackenzie, ii, 122.
[9] Dorsainvil (II), 100–11.
[10] Mackenzie, ii, 111–15.
[11] Dorsainvil (II), 204–5; Mackenzie, ii, 67.
[12] Furnished through the courtesy of M. Jacques Antoine, of the Legation of Haiti in Washington.
[13] Davis, 218–25; also occasional comments in Craige and Wirkus.
[14] St. Mery, ii, 243–4.

CHAPTER I

[1] Charlevoix, ii, 438–9.
[2] St. Mery, i, 25 ff.
[3] Ibid., i, 34.
[4] Ibid., i, 28–34.
[5] This has been remarked by Dorsainvil (I), 135; see also Herskovits, M. and F. (IV), 117–33.
[6] Cf. Herskovits (II), passim.
[7] Cf. Herskovits, M. and F. (I), passim.

CHAPTER II

[1] De Vaissière, 153–4.
[2] Ibid., 20, note 2.
[3] St. Mery, i, 5.
[4] Charlevoix, ii, 9.
[5] De Vaissière, 45.
[6] Ibid., 52; St. Mery, i, 24–5.
[7] De Vaissière, 52–3.
[8] Ibid., 55.
[9] Scelle, i, 218–20.
[10] De Vaissière, 21; Wimpffen, 82–83.
[11] Labat, i, Book II, 73–4.
[12] St. Mery, ii, 25 ff.
[13] Ibid., ii, 27–8, 47–50.
[14] Ibid., i, 80–1.
[15] De Vaissière, 104–5.
[16] Quoted by de Vaissière, 105.
[17] Compare, for example, de Vaissière, 330 ff., with St. John, 4–7.
[18] St. Mery, i, 348 ff.
[19] De Vaissière, 333.
[20] Ibid., 333–4.
[21] Ibid., 280–1.
[22] Letter of Mm. de Lamotte and Lalanne from Port-au-Prince, 25 October 1752; quoted by de Vaissière, 300–1.
[23] Stoddard, 34–6.
[24] De Vaissière, 255–75.
[25] St. Mery, i, 9.
[26] Ibid., i, 12.
[27] Ibid., i, 12–13.
[28] Ibid., i, 16.
[29] Ibid., i, 21; de Vaissière, 267 ff.
[30] St. Mery, i, 22; de Vaissière, 314–15.
[31] St. Mery, i, 11.
[32] Labat, i, Book II, plate opp. p. 245; de Vaissière, opp. 189.
[33] Wimpffen, 103.
[34] Ibid., 103–5; de Vaissière, 295–6.
[35] De Vaissière, 297, quoting Laujon, i, 135.
[36] Quoted by de Vaissière, 80.
[37] Labat: *Nouveau Voyage*, vii, 125, 130, quoted by de Vaissière, 81–2.
[38] Bellegarde, 53 ff., comments interestingly on this fact.
[39] De Vaissière, 56 ff.
[40] Dorsainvil (II), 63 ff.; Stoddard, *passim*.
[41] Summarized in de Vaissière, 89 ff.

CHAPTER III

[1] Scelle, i, 125–6.
[2] Ibid., i, 131.
[3] Charlevoix, i, 422.
[4] De Vaissière, 174.
[5] Scelle, i, 131–2.
[6] Charlevoix, i, 422.
[7] Madiou, i, *passim*; Davis, 16–23.
[8] De Vaissière, 153–6.
[9] Gaston-Martin, 119, 291; de Vaissière, 164–5.
[10] St. Mery, i, 86–7.
[11] Ibid., i, 99.
[12] Ibid., i, 68.
[13] Stoddard, *passim*, but especially Ch. IV.

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14 E.g., St. Mery, i, 5; de Vaissière, 153; Léger, 41; Stoddard, 8–9.

15 Labat, ii, 59; for another classification see Snelgrave, 158–9.

16 Herskovits, M. and F. (III).

17 St. Mery, i, 29–30.

18 De Vaissière, 156–8; Gaston-Martin, 112.

19 Scelle, i, 505–6.

20 Labat, ii, 48; de Vaissière, 158, note 1; Gaston-Martin, 122 ff.

21 De Vaissière, 165–9.

22 Charlevoix, ii, 496–8.

23 St. Mery, i, 58–9.

24 Op. cit., 201–2.

25 St. Mery, i, 42–3, 63–4; Charlevoix, ii, 501 ff.; de Vaissière, 177 ff.

26 St. Mery, i, 58.

27 Ibid., i, 51.

28 Labat, ii, 53.

29 Charlevoix, ii, 500–3; de Vaissière, 209–11.

30 De Vaissière, 189 ff.

31 Labat, i, 2, 145; St. Mery, i, 61–2; de Vaissière, 230–1, 238–43.

32 Herskovits, M. and F. (II), 75.

33 Snelgrave, 162 ff.; Gaston-Martin, 102 ff.

34 Charlevoix, i, 422–4.

35 Scelle, i, 167.

36 Charlevoix, ii, 122–4, 255–6; de Vaissière, 232.

37 St. Mery, i, 50–1.

38 Quoted by de Vaissière, 229–30.

39 Stoddard, 65.

40 De Vaissière, 233–8, 245–8.

41 St. Mery, ii, 505, 497–505.

42 Dorsainvil (II), 56 ff.; Davis, 36–114; Stoddard, *passim*.

43 Dorsainvil (II), 165–348; Léger, 160–233; Davis, 114 ff.

44 Mackenzie, i, 49–50.

45 St. John, 158–9.

46 St. John, 159.

47 St. John, Mackenzie, Hazard, and others, *passim*.

48 St. John, 211 ff.

49 Mackenzie, ii, [illegible]–30.

50 Dorsainvil (II), [illegible]1; Léger, 186–7.

CHAPTER IV

1 Dorsainvil (II), 200–1; Mackenzie, i, 96; ii, 133–4.

2 St. Mery, i, 42–3. More recently the idea that the Haitian peasant has no regular time for meals has again developed, as in Wirkus, 72.

3 Hall gives the most considered account of the Société Congo as it flourishes on the Isle à Gonave; Wirkus, 215 ff., also describes this organization, but in a popularized and, when compared to Hall's scientific statement, distorted version.

000 [4] Price-Mars (I), 206, note 1, and Wirkus, 215, define the term *combite*.

[114] [5] Wirkus, 51, 288, differentiates these work-drums from other types.

[6] Wirkus, 191, has described the efficiency with which an organized Haitian work-group accomplished its task on the road.

[7] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 146–8.

[8] A good description of a Haitian market as observed in 1835 is to be found in Hanna, 55–6.

[9] Compare Mackenzie, i, 28–9.

[10] The poverty of the Haitians is often exaggerated, and especially the concept of wealth as held by the peasant is caricatured in a way that accentuates a misunderstanding of his economic psychology. For an extreme instance of this see Craige, 42–3.

CHAPTER V

[852] [1] Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the need immediately after birth of "immersing the new-born infant in a lustral bath carefully concocted by the *vodun* priest who consecrates the child to the divinity that can preserve him against the evil-doing of malignant spirits, and rescue him from 'the power of supernatural ills.'" [845]

[844] [2] Craige, 68–9, and Wirkus, 97–9, both give accounts of wayside births in which the mothers resumed their journeys immediately after bearing their children. [608]

[3] Price-Mars (I), 34, says: "It is forbidden to speak aloud the 'baptismal' name of a child under certain circumstances, above all during the night."

[4] Parsons (I), 174, notes that "an infant born with teeth is one whose birth has been delayed so long by the *marassa* [twins] that the teeth have developed."

[5] Price-Mars (I), 135, derives the importance of the godmother from the conditions of slavery, when a child was often cared for by a foster-mother. See also St. Mery, i, 33–6, and Mackenzie, i, 273–4.

CHAPTER VI

[1] The institution of *plaçage* is mentioned in passing by Craige, 203–4, and, with complete lack of understanding, by Wirkus, 73 and 307.

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[2] Mackenzie, ii, 124.

[3] St. John, 162.

[4] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 201-2.

[5] Price-Mars (I), 205, gives this as the proper age for a man of the region of Kenskoff, near Port-au-Prince, to marry.

[6] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 216.

[7] Ibid., 211-12. A facsimile of this letter is given on pp. 213-15.

[8] Ibid., 216-17.

[9] Mackenzie, i, 38.

[10] St. John, 145-6.

[11] St. John, 145.

[12] Mackenzie, i, 37. Wirkus, 222, mentions a case of polygyny on the Isle à Gonave where the wives apparently inhabited one compound with their mutual husband. [184] [582] ← [595] →

CHAPTER VII

[591] ←

[1] This seems to differ in various parts of Haiti; thus, near Port-au-Prince, the father of the girl "designates to his future son-in-law the land where his house is to be built," according to Price-Mars (I), 216.

[2] Cf. Parsons (I), 165.

[3] Among the obligations of the peasant mentioned by Price-Mars (I), 34, is "the respect due to the elders who are the repositories of tradition." [596] →

CHAPTER VIII

[1] Whether or not vodun is a religion, a problem which Haitian writers (e.g., Price-Mars (I), 32 ff.) are prone to debate at length, need not be considered here, since to an ethnologist the answer is too patently affirmative to require discussion.

[2] St. Mery, i, 45-6.

[3] Ibid., i, 46.

[4] De Vassière, 178-9.

[5] Dorsainvil (I), 136 ff.; Price-Mars (I), 33.

[6] For a useful résumé of statements concerning Haitian serpent-worship, the grievous misunderstanding of which is an outstanding characteristic of this honest but ill-conceived work, see Williams, passim. [771] ←

[7] Price-Mars (I), 118 ff., also records his belief that serpent-worship is far less important than it has been represented, saying: "We believe it to be well-nigh abolished." Seabrook, 310-12, also holds to this view.

[8] Parsons (I), 157, states: "There is little or no philosophic or religious expression of the theory to be [991] →

000 [771]

heard in Haiti, but descriptive details of the practice abound." Elsewhere (p. 158) she speaks of "this higglety pigglety pantheon" of *loa*, whose traits "none . . . [were] . . . able to describe . . . at all systematically."

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Price-Mars (I), 32, however, mentions the existence of a theology based on African beliefs but unlike that described here.

[9] Cf. Parsons (I), 168.

[10] Nowhere in the confusion with which writers on Haiti have approached and presented *vodun* theological concepts better exemplified than in the passage found in Craige, 98–9; or 71, where a charm for working evil magic is spoken of as "something having to do with voodoo."

[illegible]

[11] Despite the importance of possession, one would hesitate before accepting in its entirety the somewhat simplistic approach of Dorsainvil that "*le vôdou se ramène à l'idée de la possession*," (I), 115.

[12] St. Mery, i, 35.

[788] [789]

[13] Parsons (I), 169, note 2, speaks of baptism, but states "*loi* Pétrou is one you do not baptize, as you do other *loi* when they come . . ." — a custom at variance with Mirebalais procedure.

[14] Cf. Parsons (I), 165, however, where the meaning of *marré* is given "to get the spirit."

[15] See Parsons (I), 164–5, for a description of a "shrine" of a worshipper of the *loa*.

[16] Cf. Dorsainvil (I), 115 ff.

[17] This is undoubtedly the explanation of Seabrook's "hermaphroditic god" called Papa Nebo (Gedenibo), which he shows on pp. 9 and 10 of the plates of his book. As is indicated elsewhere in this volume, Gede, who does not partake of this characteristic in the least, has thus been woefully misunderstood by Seabrook.

[18] Dorsainvil (I), 72–4, describes possession at a *vodun* ceremony, and Wirkus, 173 ff., also gives a description of a possession scene, but his account is pitched so hysterically as materially to lessen its usefulness for serious comparisons.

[19] (I) *passim*, but especially 18–19, 58–61, 86–7, 111–12. A definition of *vodun* more acceptable to those who approach social phenomena from an ethnological and historical point of view is to be found on page 190. Price-Mars (I), 103 ff., gives an extended criticism of Dorsainvil's hypothesis, though from quite a different point of

view from that given here.

[80] Parsons (I), 171, describes how she witnessed a woman "refuse the visitation of her *loa*."

[81] Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the "*obligations annuelles de participer par un acte quelconque aux sacrifices cultuels* . . ." laid on the voduist.

[82] St. Mery, i, 51; see also Dorsainvil (I), 46.

[83] Seabrook's description of a "Pétro" ceremony (pp. 31 ff.) deserves, on the basis of its inner inconsistencies, to be considered a masterpiece of misstatement and misinterpretation. Its effect, and the effect of others like it, have done much to perpetuate this incorrect idea of the Pétro rites.

[84] Dorsainvil, Price-Mars, and Parsons all employ these terms, rather than *papaloi* and *mamaloi*, the designations found in more popular books such as those of Craige, Seabrook, and Wirkus. The latter two of these writers seem confused about these words and fail to make it clear whether or not they mean the same or different functionaries of the *vodun* cult when they use the words *houngan* and *papaloi*.

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[85] Compare Dorsainvil (I), 75–7 and 121, where he expresses a low opinion of the *hungan*, holding him unreliable and insincere in his worship, as contrasted to the *vrai serviteur*.

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[86] Op. cit., 175–9.

[87] Even though followers of the *vodun* cult are more organized in some parts of Haiti than in Mirebalais, it is arrant nonsense to speak of a "supreme high priestess" of the cult, its *grande mamaloi*, as does Seabrook, 117, or of a "black pope of voodoo" as Wirkus has done (in *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 168, pp. 38–49, 188–98; December 1933–January 1934).

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[88] A sober statement of the degrees of initiation into the cult (although these do not hold for Mirebalais) is to be found in Dorsainvil (I), 168–9, and also 64.

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CHAPTER IX

[1] Price-Mars (I), 144, gives a long and excellent list of the reasons for offering sacrifices.

[2] A description of a *humfort* destroyed by the Marines during their occupation, and a detailed account of its

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contents, is given by Wirkus, 178–9.

- Compare this description with the *humfort* pictured in Johnston, p. 194.

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- It is to be emphasized that in the course of the *vodun* rituals witnessed during this field-work, none of the "frenzy of the blood lust" that is so favorite an aspect of these ceremonies with writers of books on Haiti was encountered. As an extreme example of this heightening of the tone with which a ceremony is described, the work of Seabrook may be cited, for phrases such as "blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened" used by him mark perhaps an all-time record for distortion of the inner discipline of the *vodun* cult.

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- Cf. Parsons's brief sketch, (I), 172–3, of a *mangé loi*, though the "bloody anointing" of which she speaks was not seen to occur in Mirebalais *services*. Detailed descriptions of what apparently were *services* are given by Wirkus, 168 ff., who, though honest in recounting what he saw, realized nothing of its significance; and Seabrook (pp. 54–70), who reads so much into what he purports to have witnessed that the entire account is rendered useless.

CHAPTER X

- [1] Compare Parsons (I), 167–72.

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- The drunkenness at serious dances reported by Parsons (I), 172, and others, would not be tolerated in Mirebalais.
- Price-Mars (I), 208, gives the name of *asotór* for the great drum.

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- Much nonsense has been written concerning these drums. Many writers — all non-Haitians — stress the existence of a drum language, which seems to be an assertion of dubious truth.
- This is a striking example of what Dorsainvil (I), 73–4 and 131 ff., calls the *masque vésanique* in detailing the effects of possession on the features of the possessed. See also the discussion of possession in Price-Mars (I), 122–3. The Gede possession described by Craige, 73–4, must, on the basis of customary Haitian behavior under possession, be subject to reinterpretation.
- Cf. Parsons (I), 170.

CHAPTER XI

[1] Compare Parsons (I), 173–4, where the cult of twins is discussed and some of its rites described.

[2] Price-Mars (I), 35, mentions this as a power believed to be held by twins.

[3] The phrase "cult of the dead" as employed here must be sharply differentiated from its misuse by Seabrook (82 ff.).

[4] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 34.

[5] Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the custom of always burying charms with the dead.

[6] Wakes have been described by Seabrook, 89–91, and others, but in such a manner that it is difficult to dissect out the reality of what was witnessed from the imaginative elements.

[7] Cf. Wirkus, 221–3. The custom of giving the dead food at the grave, which he describes, is not followed when burial occurs in the Mirebalais town cemetery, nor, seemingly, elsewhere in the valley. [764] [184] → [769] [114] ←

[8] See the description of a commemorative rite for the dead in Price-Mars (I) 148–50. [764] ←

[9] This is a rule followed in West African practice.

CHAPTER XII

[1] An interesting attempt to account for this is found in St. John, 190–1, where he speaks of the "two Vaudoux sects," one good and one evil.

[2] St. Mery, i, 56. The term *garde* is almost entirely absent in later writings, the more sensational *wanga* (*ouanga*) being preferred.

[3] Légar, 55, note 34.

[4] Cf. Dorsainvil (I), 171.

[5] No better summary of this could be had than that in Parsons (I), 179, written after a single séance with a *gangan*.

[6] Pp. 324–31.

[7] Mr. J. C. Trevor informs me that during a recent field-trip to the Virgin Islands he discovered books of magic in common use, obtained from a Chicago dealer. [171] [191] [789] →

[8] It is not without interest to note that in the case reported in a Port-au-Prince newspaper and reproduced in facsimile by Seabrook, 334, concerning a woman from the commune of Mirebalais accused of sorcery, the name of the woman was *Aidman*.

[9] Cf. Parsons (II), 398.

[10] See above, pp. 91–3.

[11] The closest correspondence [121] [775] →

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to the Haitian *baka* found in the New World are the *bakru* of Dutch Guiana, who in turn derive from the "little folk" of West African belief, beings that are always important in making magic. See Herskovits, M. and F. (IV), 105–7.

[12] Dorsainvil (I), 130, mentions this rite.

[13] Notably by Seabrook, 92 ff., who made great capital of the concept and purported actually to have seen these beings! Parsons (II), ii, 591. Tale 77, I, reproduces a Haitian's account in Créole of how a Sorcerer goes about ensnaring a victim to make of him a zombi.

[14] Parsons (I), 178–9.

CHAPTER XIII

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[1] Price-Mars (II), 96 ff., gives a detailed description of the peasant house. The beehive-shaped hut mentioned by Craige, 56, is not found in Mirebalais, though the valley is but a short distance from Hinche, of which he was writing. Seabrook, 18, also describes the interior of a peasant house.

[2] Charlevoix, ii, 42.

[3] St. John, 153.

[4] Seabrook, 104 ff., devotes some space to a discussion of *pénitence*, but so changes its meaning to the Haitians that it is quite useless in making a serious comparison of data.

[5] See the discussion in Dorsainvil (I), 150, concerning other retentions of African motor behavior in Haiti.

[6] Craige, Seabrook, and Wirkus, all give lively accounts of cock-fights.

[7] Cf. Price-Mars (I), 1–15, for accounts of the manner in which stories are told in Haiti. It is to be noted that the African belief that a tale must not be told during the daytime persists there.

[8] A large collection of Haitian folk-tales has been published recently by Parsons (II), ii, 470–596.

[9] Audain has published what is perhaps the largest collection of Créole proverbs; his work, however, is unfortunately out of print.

CHAPTER XIV

[1] Dorsainvil (I), 158.

[2] Exceptions to this statement must be made in the case of the careful study of the relationship between Catholicism and vodun by Price-

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Mars (I), 163 ff., and to the briefer discussions of this point in Dorsainvil (I), 33–7, and Parsons (I), *passim*, but especially p. 179. Some consideration is also given to this mingling of religious beliefs in Wirkus, 20, 22, 177, 179, and in Seabrook, 17–20, though in this latter citation the distortion of native belief usually found in Seabrook's book is not absent.

- Wirkus, 188–9, describes the baptism of Rada drums, though certain details in his account appear somewhat unlikely.
- Compare Parsons (I), 165, 175.
- Cf. Ortiz, *passim*.
- Cf. Ramos, Ch. V; Ignace: Nina-Rodrigues, *passim*.
- Price-Mars (I), 180–1, gives the following correspondences between vodun-cult deities and saints of the Church:

Legba:	St. Anthony
Ogun Badagri:	St. James the Elder
Agomme Tonnerre:	St. John the Baptist
Dagui Bologuay:	St. Joseph
Roi d'Agouessou:	St. Louis (King of France)
Grande Mambo Batala:	St. Anne
Maîtresse Erzilie:	the Holy Virgin (especially the Holy Virgin of the Nativity)
La Sirène:	the Assumption
Pierre D'Ambala:	St. Peter

Seabrook, 13, speaks of "Maîtresse Ezilée . . . the mild blessed Virgin Mary," and Wirkus, 178–9, correlates Damballa with St. Patrick, and Legba with St. Peter.

- The original of the part of this *oraison* given here is reproduced in facsimile by Seabrook, 309, and quoted in full by Price-Mars (I), 183–4; the latter also gives, 182–3, another of these *oraisons populaires*, to Ste. Radegonde, who is regarded in it as an associate of Baron Samedi in the cemetery. For *oraisons* used in the fetish cult of Cuba, see Ortiz, 90 ff.

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- Price-Mars (I), 51, speaks of "*le catholicisme hybride de nos masses populaires*," as later, 38, he denominates vodun as an African religion "*altérée par sa juxtaposition plus que séculaire à la religion catholique. . . .*" See also p. 122. The points of resemblance between Catholicism and vodun which encouraged the resulting synthesis are tellingly numbered on pp. 164–5.

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[10] (I), 169 ff.

[11] The tale of the priest's paralysis is also told in Price-Mars (I), 172.

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[12] According to Price-Mars (I), 171, there are three classes of religionists in Haiti: Catholics, vodunists, and those who hold simultaneously to both forms.

[13] Cf. Dorsainvil (I), 40-2.

[14] See Price-Mars (I), 138-9, for a description of the services in a "shouting" American Negro church he visited in Washington, D.C., which makes the point brought forward here.

[15] Compare Dorsainvil (I), 18-19.

CHAPTER XV

[1] (I), 60.

[2] Herskovits, M. and F. (III), and Herskovits (III).

[3] Herskovits (I).

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APPENDIX IV

GLOSSARY OF CRÉOLE TERMS USED IN THE TEXT

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NOTE: The orthography employed in this book to render Créole terms has retained French spelling except where this is confusing to the English-speaking reader (so that, for example, ouè, "to see," from voir is written wè, and ouanga, "evil charm," given as wanga), or where obvious African derivation makes phonetic spelling desirable (as vodun, "vodun," instead of vaudou; or hungan, "priest," instead of houngan). In such cases, vowels have the so-called "Continental" values.

acassan, an African dish which figures in offerings to the *loa* as well as in the Haitian cuisine.
açon, calabash rattle used in sacred dances.
action *de grâce*, a ritual comprising prayers and hymns of the Catholic Church which precedes any service for the gods of the vodun cult.
adjanikon, a male initiate in the vodun cult; also pronounced unjanikon.
adoration, song sung at vodun rites or ceremonies of the cult of the dead when offerings of money are given the officiants.
arrêt, a magic charm to ward off evil; see *drogue*, *garde*.
[illegible], a figure in vodun dances saluting the gods.
avalou, a dance of the vodun cycle marked by pronounced movements of arm- and shoulder-muscles; also pronounced yanvalou.
azeto, a witch or werewolf; see *loup-garou*, [illegible] aire.

baguette, drumstick.
baigneur des morts, the functionary who bathes the dead and watches over the body.

104 *baka*, an evil spirit actuated by a *loa* which commonly takes the form of some animal when carrying misfortune to the one against whom it has been directed; an evil spirit who acts as emissary for the one who has entered into a compact with it; see *engagement*.
bal, name for any European type of dance.
bamboche, generic term used to denote a recreational dance; often employed in Mirebalais to designate a serious vodun dance by those whose only participation in it is social.
banda, an African type of social dance.
barrière, an entrance-way; the guardian of the *barrière* is Legba.
basilique, a tree whose leaves are used in making infusions employed for medico-magical purposes.
bassin, a deep pool in a stream, the favorite residence of water-spirits.
bocor, practitioner of magic.
bois, tree; also called *pié bwa*.
borné, to "restrain"; the action taken to prevent a malign spirit from inflicting harm on the person or family to whom it has come.
bossal, wild, untamed, unbaptized; used particularly for any spirit or object in the vodun cult prior to its consecration.
boucan, bonfire; the designation "buccaneer" derives from this word.
bula, the smallest of the trio of vodun drums.

caille, house; *caille mystères*, house where gods of the vodun cult are worshipped.
calebasse, a gourd; an African type of social dance.
calenda, an African type of social dance.
canarie, earthenware jar; *loa nan canarie*, the spirit of an ancestor rescued "from under the water."
caplata, a minor practitioner of magic, good or bad; employed as a term of derision.
cérémonie, a complex of rituals of the vodun cult; see *service*.
chef d'escouade, a man at whose behest others come to do co-operative agricultural labor.
cheval, *ch'wal*, horse; idiomatically, the devotee of a *loa*: the deity "mounts" his "horse" when possession occurs.
clairin, raw rum.

combite, co-operative work-group; similar to but not as formally organized as the Société Congo of other portions of Haiti.

commère, godmother; a term of derision for male homosexuals.

compère, godfather.

Congo, region of Africa, the name of which, in Haiti, is used for a "company" of *vodun* deities; name of a social dance.

connaissance, knowledge of curing and the control of supernatural forces conferred on their devotees by certain *vodun* deities.

coup de main, a small co-operative work-group.

couvert sec, minor offerings to *vodun* deities which do not include any animal sacrifices; synonym for *mangé sec.*

Créole, native to Haiti; applied to gods, human beings, and plants.

Dahomey, an African kingdom; in Haiti, name given *vodun* deities.

démon, evil spirit; male counterpart of *loup-garou.*

dernière prière, final prayer for the dead, which is made nine days after the funeral. See *novena.*

directeur, one who supervises the work of a *combite.*

dosu, the child born after twins.

drogue, a powerful magic charm which protects its owner against all inimical forces falling in a specific category, such as war or arrest. See *garde, arrêt.*

engagé, bondsman; white man who in pre-Revolutionary times repaid passage to Haiti by working for a given number of years on a plantation.

engagement, compact entered into between a man and a supernatural power, which binds him to fulfill exacting obligations in return for a fixed reward; always a matter of evil magic.

farine Guinée, "flour of Africa" — powdered ash used in *vodun* rites.

gammelle, a large wooden vessel used in preparing and serving food.

gangan, an important *vodun* priest; also pronounced *n'gan.*

garde, protective charm, operative in specific cases. See *arrêt, drogue.*

gourde, unit of Haitian currency, at one time the equivalent of the French franc, and now stabilized at twenty cents United States currency.
Guinée, Africa.

habitant, peasant.
habitation, farm, plantation; center of relationship group.
haut chant, song saluting a *vodun* deity, usually of the warrior group.
humfort, " temple " of a *vodun* priest.
hungan, priest of the *vodun* cult.
hunsi, initiate in the *vodun* cult.
huntòr, spirit of the *vodun* drums.

Ibo, an African tribe of eastern Nigeria whose name has been given a group of *vodun* deities.
image, chromolithograph of a Catholic saint.

job, word taken from English to indicate a task one is paid to perform.
jok (*mal jok*), evil eye.

kanzo, ordeal by fire; *hunsi kanzo,* a member of the *vodun* cult who has passed through this ordeal.
kembe, to seize, to harass; used of a supernatural power or of the dead.
koklo, chicken.
kola, a sweet, non-alcoholic drink.

lambi, conch-shell horn.
lavée tête, ceremonial washing of the head when a *vodun* spirit is to be baptized; any ritual or healing washing of the head with ingredients sacred to the gods.
lettre de demande, a written proposal of marriage.
loa, deity of the *vodun* cult; see *saint, mystère.*
loup-garou, lou'gawou, werewolf; female counterpart of *démon.*
lutin, ghost of unbaptized child.

macoute, peasant's carrying basket.
magie, magic; usually employed in the sense of black magic, as

against the term *traitement* for healing magic, and *arrêt* or *garde* for protective magic.

maison de servitude, house where worship of family *vodun* gods is centered.

Mait', master; employed in connection with supernatural powers, as *Gran' Mait'*, God; *Mait' 'Bitation*, Master of the Habitation; *Mait' Carrefour (Calfu)*, Master of the Crossroads; *Mait' Gran' Bois*, Master of the Great Forest; *Mait' Source*, Master of the Stream; *Mait' Tête*, Master of the Head, or the ruling deity of a *vodun* initiate.

majeur, term of derision employed for shirkers at a *combite*.

malengen, a type of yam.

malheureux, unfortunates; applied to those who are poor, but not in abject poverty.

mamaloi, priestess of the *vodun* cult; a term not employed in Mirebalais.

mambu, priestess of the *vodun* cult.

mangé, a sacrifice; to eat; *mangé sec*, equivalent of *couvert sec* (q.v.); *mangé marassa*, sacrifice for the spirits of twins; *mangé morts*, feast for the family dead; *mangé moun*, idiomatic usage to denote the action of a spirit who "eats" his victim by sending fatal illness or death-dealing accident.

manman, mother; the largest drum of the *vodun* trio; the most important peg of a *vodun* drum.

manuba, a European style of dance in which only males participate.

marassa, twins; spirit of twins; one of the forces making up the supernatural universe of the Haitian.

mariage, marriage in the Church, in contrast to *plaçage*, or mating not given ecclesiastical sanction.

marré, to tie; used to denote proper control of a *vodun* deity by its devotee; *marré corde*, to make charms.

marron, runaway; wild.

marronage, state of freedom attained by Negroes who fled the plantations in pre-Revolutionary times.

Martinique, an African type of social dance especially favored at rites for the dead; name for entire cycle of social dances which follow rites for the dead.

mauvaises aires, synonym for *loup-garou* (q.v.).

mazon, an African type of dance performed as an interlude in a *vodun* dance.

mive, a small work-group.

morts, dead; one of the three forces invoked whenever the supernatural powers of the vodunist believer are being called or fêted.

mystères, African gods; synonym for *loa* and *saints*.

n'âme, soul.

Nègre, Negro; *gran' Nègre*, a person of outstanding spiritual power; *gros Nègre*, a wealthy and powerful member of the community.

neige, dew.

notable, an important member of the community.

novene, a nine-day rite for the soul of one recently dead, held on the nine nights immediately following the funeral, and completed by the *dernière prière* (q.v.).

occupation, a task; especially a task set a malign spirit to be performed before he can work his evil deeds; that is, a task impossible to perform.

ogan, iron used to sound the basic *vodun* rhythms, consisting usually of the blade of a hoe struck by a spike.

pannier, saddle-bags of basketry used by peasants to transport produce.

papaloi, priest of the *vodun* cult; term rarely employed by Haitians themselves, but favored by non-Haitian writers; see *hungan*.

pauvres, the destitute members of a community.

penitence, special dress worn to fulfill a vow made to one or several deities of the *vodun* cult, or in accordance with a desire expressed by the gods; usually made in the colors sacred to the gods.

Pétro, a group of *vodun* deities; the designation is said to be derived from the name of a powerful *vodun* priest of pre-Revolutionary days.

plaçage, type of socially sanctioned mating which does not have Church approval; opposite of *mariage* (q.v.).

placée, a woman taken as a mate without a Church wedding.

point, oblique reference to a person or situation in conversation or song; a magic charm.

porto cabesse, the central post of the *tonnelle* (q.v.), down which the *vodun* gods are believed to make their entrance into the dancing-space and where they remain until they are invoked; also termed *porte mita*.

prêt' savanne, "bush-priest"; an officiant at *vodun* rites and at services for the dead who reads the prayers of the Church.

Rada, name of a "squad" of *vodun* deities principally of Dahomean and Nigerian derivation; the word itself is a corruption of the name of the Dahomean town of Allada.

robe, dress; *robe de penitence*, robe of penitence (see *penitence*); *robe tambou'*, "dress" placed on a *vodun* drum.

renvoyé, term applied to the ritual of "banishing" a *vodun* deity who has been troubling a family.

saint, as in English, saint of the Catholic Church; also applied to the gods of the *vodun* cult, in which usage it is a synonym for *loa* and *mystère*.

seconde, the middle drum of the *vodun* trio.

service, term applied to any non-Catholic ritual for *vodun* gods, for twins, or for the dead that is not a dance.

simidor, a singer of songs; especially a man who leads the singing at *combites*.

Société Congo, a closely organized co-operative work-group found in certain parts of Haiti which corresponds to the loose grouping called *combite* in Mirebalais.

'ti moun, child; institution of quasi-adoption of children.

tonnelle, temporary thatched shelter for *vodun* dances.

traitement, healing by means of herbs and magic charms.

trône, the altar at a *vodun* service.

vagabond, term of opprobrium, more insulting than in English.

vever, symbolic designs for the gods traced on the ground by the *vodun* priest in white flour and ashes.

vien-vien, ghost.

vodun, "voodoo"; a complex of African belief and ritual governing in large measure the religious life of the Haitian peasantry; in a more restricted sense, a type of dance.

wanga, a charm that works evil magic.

104 *arase*, an African type of dance.

zombi, soulless being who becomes an automaton for the enrichment of a sorcerer who had "killed" him and after burial had recovered the body to set it to work without respite and without needs or desires, until the day "set by God" arrives for the natural death of this being.

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APPENDIX V

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NOTE: This list of works in no way claims completeness, since there are hundreds of titles on Haiti whose inclusion here would serve no good purpose. Only such articles and books are mentioned to which reference has actually been made in the text. It has also not seemed advisable to include works of fiction and fictionized history bearing on Haiti, such as J. B. Cinéas's *La Drame de la Terre*, or Justin Lhérisson's *La Famille de Pitite Caille*, or Guy Endore's *Babouk*, or John Vandercook's *Black Majesty*. Since this book presents statements of fact concerning Haitian life, these products of the creative imagination, excellent though they are, could not in the nature of the case be employed to document the exposition.

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[For the cultural influences on the slave population of Haiti by the white settlers (who are also Haitian), see categories 178 and 563.]

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[For information on the curing and magical functions of the hungan, see also category 793.]

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[Since the Negro population of Haiti is derived primarily from African stock, data pertinent to the continuation, with modifications, of African cultural traits to fit the Haitian pattern will be found in category 178.]

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[Information on the *bocô* or *bocor* as a diviner will be found in category 791.]

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[For a general cultural summary of the Dahomean people, see 1: Herskovits, SV3 Haiti file, category 116, pp. 25-32.]